



Celebrating America's **Cultural
Diversity**





Celebrating America's Cultural Diversity

Projects Supported by
State and Regional Arts Agencies and the
National Endowment for the Arts

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in cooperation with the National Endowment for the Arts*

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The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) is the membership organization of the nation's state and jurisdictional arts agencies. The members, through NASAA, participate in the establishment of national arts policy and advocate the importance of the diverse arts and cultures of the United States. NASAA serves as the focus of communication and partnership between the state arts agencies, the National Endowment for the Arts, and both arts and government service organizations. NASAA provides its member agencies with professional and leadership opportunities, as well as information to assist them in decision making and management.

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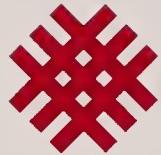


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Foreword

Over the past several years the cultural diversity documented by census takers and demographers has resulted in an increasing public awareness of the tremendous wealth to be found in America's vast and growing number of culturally specific communities. The music, dance, crafts, visual arts, theater, literature and storytelling of culturally diverse groups have the power to renew community spirit, stimulate economic activity, create bridges of understanding between cultures, instill discipline and self-worth and unite generations.

Celebrating America's Cultural Diversity follows *A Rural Arts Sampler*, which was published last year to document some of the ways in which the fifty-six state and jurisdictional arts agencies and their seven regional organizations promote the arts in rural areas with support from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). It will be followed in turn by a publication—to be entitled *Part of the Solution*—highlighting our joint efforts to invest in arts projects that address pressing social needs. This series of publications is intended to share successful strategies and illustrate a few of the ways in which these agencies work together to support projects that are making a positive difference in people's lives throughout the United States.

Support for this diversity of cultures is and must be a fundamental purpose of the public arts agencies. Indeed the NEA's enabling legislation declares it "is vital to a democracy to honor and preserve its multicultural heritage" and links this support to "the fostering of mutual respect for the diverse beliefs and values of all persons and groups." The stories that follow document some of the rewards we all realize by investing in American culture through public arts agencies.

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Introduction

For the next few years, one of the most important agenda items that both the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the state and territorial arts agencies share is support for the creative spectrum of cultural diversity as it relates to the development of our country.

In less than 20 years approximately one-third of the American population will be African American, Native American, Hispanic American or Asian American. This fact signals either a tremendous problem or an extraordinary opportunity for the nation, depending on what we as a country elect to do. Our failure to experience and understand that diversity—the variety of visions and traditions that shape our own and our neighbor's life—can frustrate our every collective attempt to improve our society. In the face of American society we must recognize our own cultural features and those of our neighbors.

I am of the opinion that cultural policy, as carried forth by the NEA and the state arts agencies, can represent the best opportunity we have for the recognition and celebration of diversity. These agencies are positioned to play a pivotal role in the process of documenting and recording the enormous creative energy that exists within their various racial and ethnic groupings.

These agencies also have the power to enhance attempts by various groups to interpret and reinterpret what this new world means to each of them.

Programs such as the ones illustrated in this book represent some of the outstanding cultural experiences that the NEA and the state arts agencies nurture and sustain. These experiments can guide the nation on new paths of imagination and social experimentation, and in turn could be used by other nations as an example of what can occur within a diverse population.

And, should anyone argue that the development of such policies and programs would cost too much or take too long, I would simply point out that programs such as Expansion Arts and Folk Arts at the federal level, and rural arts initiatives and cultural diversity programming at the state level, have been working in this field for many years and performing brilliantly.

Constructive participatory programs that share the wealth of our nation's cultural diversity will greatly reduce the likelihood of a repeat of the upheavals we witnessed in Los Angeles and replace this scenario with a thousand examples of hope and promise as illustrated here in *Celebrating America's Cultural Diversity*.

William E. Strickland, Jr.
Member, National Council on the Arts



Diversity in the Desert: The Las Vegas Folk Arts Project



❖ The neon glow of downtown Las Vegas gives little hint of the cultural diversity to be found within this sprawling, all-night city.

Photo by Blanton Owen

by Andrea Graham

Where else but Las Vegas would you find a Jewish cantor who rides a unicycle in a casino show? It seems like an awkward combination, but for Gary Golbart it hasn't been a problem reconciling a life of traditional religious faith and leadership with the life of an entertainer. In fact, there are some commonalities, and he calls the Friday-night temple services a show in their own right. For Jews in Europe years ago, it was "the greatest entertainment they ever saw," he says. "I see myself as that extension."

Golbart is currently the full-time cantor for Temple Beth Am in Las Vegas, but is still involved in a local musical theater group after nearly twenty years as a performer and producer with several of the Strip casino extravaganzas. In his home town of St. Louis, he studied gymnastics, theater and music, as well as apprenticed to a cantor. On a vacation trip to Vegas Golbart chanced into a job as an acrobat. He soon became the show's lead singer and master of ceremonies, toured the world as part of a unicycle act and eventually became entertainment director at the Dunes and the Stardust. All the while he was also deeply involved in a local Jewish congregation, conducting services and leading the singing. One year the two sides of Golbart's life came together when he conducted High Holiday services at the Dunes. "Only in Las Vegas could I be head of the most famous topless show in the world and still have my Friday nights and *daven* (pray) and put on *tefillin* (leather boxes containing scripture passages) . . . I'm comfortable in both worlds."

❖ A History of Diversity

"Only in Las Vegas" is a familiar refrain in the city most people associate with gambling and glamour. Usually they are referring to the town's 24-hour life-style, where you can get a hamburger at three in the morning with no trouble; or the fact that there are erupting volcanoes and

talking statues and medieval jousting tournaments around every corner; or the idea that you can do things in Vegas you wouldn't dream of getting away with at home. But there are other, subtler, "only in Vegas" scenes, like Cubans making hand-rolled cigars at a shop on the Strip, or a Paraguayan harpist playing in a Mexican restaurant, or a Thai Buddhist temple in the middle of the desert. Maybe these things stand out because they are signs of real life in a city most people treat as a stage set, or a Disneyland for adults.

Nevada has long had an undeserved reputation as a cultural wasteland. In the rural areas, the dry, forbidding landscape has been equated with an equally desiccated arts scene; in the cities of Reno and Las Vegas the overpowering neon glow of the tourism and entertainment industries has blinded outsiders to more substantial cultural goings-on. Nevada has always been a place people passed through on the way to somewhere else; the few who did stop off were usually looking for quick riches in the gold and silver fields and left again with the inevitable bust. But there were some who stopped and stayed, who "stuck," as Wallace Stegner says.

The travelers and those who stuck have always been a diverse lot. In the late 1800s, for example, Nevada had the highest percentage of foreign-born residents of any state in the union. The state has also always been a highly urban place, rather than agrarian, since its mining camps and railroad towns were industrially based and linked by transportation and communication networks to the rest of the country and the world. European immigrants from Germany, Italy, Greece, Ireland, France and other countries quickly assimilated into the dominant culture because they were part of small, close-knit communities and they had to cooperate to survive. European cultural diversity soon metamorphosed into a unified community. Other minority groups in early Nevada

didn't fare as well, notably the Native Americans and Chinese, who were kept in segregated communities and given only menial jobs.

Today Nevada remains one of the most urban states (although it is one of the smallest in total population and one of the largest in area) with 83 percent of the population living in the two large cities of Reno and Las Vegas. The dramatic growth of Las Vegas in the last ten years, during which the population doubled to 800,000, has meant an even greater growth in diversity. The African American, Latino and Asian/Pacific Island populations are exploding in a city and a state that were 90 percent white for most of their history, and diversity is becoming a major issue.

❖ We Are All Pioneers

The Nevada State Council on the Arts (NSCA) has always tried to encourage and support diverse organizations and programs, but until recently they were few and far between. In the cultural community, mainstream organizations are now scrambling to include a broader representation of cultures in their performances, exhibits and programs, and on their boards and staffs. Grass-roots organizations based in diverse cultures are also starting to come together to promote their own art forms.

In 1985 NSCA established a Folk Arts Program to reach constituents not served by other arts council programs and to address the needs of traditional and culturally diverse communities. The Folk Arts Program is often the arts council's first contact with non-mainstream, minority and ethnic groups, and is seen as a way to build relationships that can later broaden into other areas of the arts as well. NSCA's first folk arts projects were in rural areas because they were the least-served, had the fewest resources and were the simplest to work with. The field of folklore has also historically been biased to-

ward rural art forms, and the most obviously unique Nevada cultures are cowboys and Indians, so that seemed the logical place to start. Projects in the first five years of the program included two rural county folk arts surveys, with resulting festivals, exhibits and publications; a slide-tape show on everyday traditions of ranch life; a series of radio shows; and folk arts apprenticeships in Native American and cowboy arts.

But you can't live in Nevada and ignore Las Vegas, so the next logical project was a survey of traditional arts and artists there. The Las Vegas Folk Arts Survey was a two-year project begun in the summer of 1991 and funded with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts Folk Arts Program. With NSCA's earlier projects in rural areas there usually were no existing cultural agencies to work with, and the projects were small enough that the arts council could do them alone. In Las Vegas, however, there were solid organizations that had established track records of folk arts programming, an interest in doing more and the vital community connections and resources that are necessary for a such a large undertaking. Both the City of Las Vegas and Clark County have active cultural affairs offices, and both were very interested in learning about local traditional arts and artists; the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society was searching for ways to make community connections; and KUNV Public Radio at the University of Nevada Las Vegas was already providing diverse community programming. All of these organizations committed time and money to the project, and their knowledge of local groups and individuals was invaluable to an out-of-town folklorist.

The first year of the project was spent learning as much as possible about Las Vegas in general, and conducting fieldwork with the traditional communities and the artists who have made the city their home. Although



Glass-bender Mark Willett is one of the many artisans discovered during the folk arts survey conducted by the Nevada State Council on the Arts.

Photo by Russell Frank

statistically an urban area with urban amenities, Las Vegas is actually a huge suburb. It is very new, growing rapidly, laid out in sprawling subdivisions and strip shopping malls, and is generally a classic example of the new American automobile-based city. Such places are not known for nurturing a sense of community that would support traditional art forms. Add to that the overwhelming culture of tourism and gambling, and any sane folklorist would run back to the sticks.

But the same elements that make Las Vegas difficult for a cultural worker also make it a fascinating challenge. Las Vegas is still in the process of becoming. People are arriving from every state in the union and every country in the world, and those who stay will determine what kind of place it becomes. What are they bringing with them? What attitudes and cultural styles and art forms are they mixing into the stew of Vegas? How are they adapting to Las Vegas's unique environment? How are they making it home? In such a new place, everyone has a chance to contribute. As Cantor Golbart says, "We are all pioneers out here."

❖ Behind the Neon

Still, doing folklore fieldwork in Vegas is not easy, as NSCA folklorist Andrea Graham and contract fieldworkers Lesley Williams and Russell Frank found out. Requests for information about folk artists were met with blank stares, and dead ends and false leads abounded. Except for the black community (which was segregated from its beginnings in the 1940s), people have not settled in old-fashioned ethnic neighborhoods, and the city's newness and mobility mean that people don't know each other yet, even within a cultural group. Residents are also busy getting settled and making a living, often working night shifts in the 24-hour service-oriented economy, and so they haven't had time to main-

tain elements of their traditional culture.

However, there are signs that members of ethnic and cultural groups are starting to find each other and are expressing a desire to present and pass on their arts, especially to their children. For example, no fewer than three cultural organizations have formed in the black community in the last few years, with overlapping interests in researching the history of blacks in Vegas, organizing cultural classes for kids and presenting an African American cultural festival. A Thailand Nevada Association was formed primarily to promote economic development, but it also sponsors social events that include music and classical dance. The Nevada Association of Latin Americans supports plans for a museum of Latino culture and arts, as well as providing social services for the Latino community. The Las Vegas Indian Center provides job training and other services, and a corner of its lobby houses a store where urban Indians can sell beadwork, weaving and other crafts. The Japanese American Citizens' League would like to sponsor classes in Taiko drumming with a master artist who has moved to town. Many of these groups get numerous requests for programs from schools. They would like to do more in the way of passing their culture to their own young people, as well as to the wider public, but they need money and assistance in organizing.

Individual artists are also struggling to maintain their culture, usually while holding full-time jobs. The members of a South American musical group can't find rehearsal space and have been practicing outdoors in local parks; they can't practice in their apartments and community center space is overbooked, though they couldn't afford even the minimal fees anyway. A Navajo silversmith travels to craft shows on weekends because he can't sell his work for what it's worth in Las Vegas, and dealers take too high a commission. A Navajo weaver has

similar problems and sells mostly by word of mouth, which means she gets to keep all the money, but she has less exposure. A Thai classical dancer performed in public in Las Vegas for the first time in April, and was so good people thought he had come from Los Angeles; by September he had 20 students and was swamped with requests to perform, but he had to fit in teaching and performing between his two jobs. Two Paraguayan musicians, a harpist and a guitarist/singer, perform in a Mexican restaurant six nights a week, but have had to tailor their music to popular taste and play countless renditions of "La Bamba;" they at least can make a living with their music, although not in the way they might prefer.

Many of these traditional art forms and similar difficult situations could occur in any large city, and in many ways Las Vegas is "just like anywhere else," as the locals are fond of explaining. Yet Vegas is also undeniably different because of the casino culture, which pervades the city's whole reason for being. Most jobs are tied either directly or indirectly to gaming, tourism and entertainment. Tourists don't come to town for the history or culture, so it is difficult for cultural organizations to rely on them for an audience and for artists to make a living.

❖ Only in Vegas

From a folklorist's point of view, the gaming and tourism businesses provide an entire new constellation of occupational subcultures with rich traditions of their own. Craps dealers have a huge vocabulary of specialized terms and expressions that are made up daily and played with on the job, sometimes to refer to specific bets or situations, and sometimes to communicate without players knowing what is being said. For example, when the dice bounce off the table and land on the wooden rim, invalidating the play, a stickman might say "Don't pay the cash, it's in the ash," "Found a perch in the birch,"

"Can't call it fo' ya, it's in the sequoia," "No joke, it's in the oak," or "No number, in the lumber." This use of language keeps a game lively, and forms a sense of community and creativity among the four dealers working a game—it adds a human touch to the increasingly corporate structure of the casinos. And even in the fast-paced casino world, dealers lament the passing of the good old days and tell sentimental stories about how much better it used to be.

Vegas entertainers also have a host of traditions: the good and bad luck beliefs of dancers and showgirls, the trading of tricks and patter among magicians, Las Vegas jokes made up and passed on by comedians. Even the neon signs that are Las Vegas's most visible identifying characteristic have traditions behind them. The art of the "glass-benders" who make the signs has many similarities to other craft traditions. The necessary skills are usually learned through apprenticeship with an experienced sign maker, and anyone in the business will tell you that the process can never be mechanized—it will always involve human skill and judgement. What many glass-benders like most is that their work is up in public for everyone to see; they enjoy driving by a huge casino, looking up and pointing out their creations to their kids and out-of-town visitors. As glass-bender Mark Willett says, "One hundred years from now I'll be gone, but my neon'll still be up there. If you're going to put up some neon, it's nice to know it's up in Vegas."

The traditions of the variety of workers who make Las Vegas run add to the cultural diversity of the city just as much as ethnic arts do, and need to be recognized, studied and shared in the same way. In fact, in planning public presentations of local traditions, they may be even more of an attraction for tourists than what is usually thought of as folk art because they *are* unique

to Las Vegas, and can give a glimpse into the daily life of the locals.

Cultivating the Garden

As part of the first year of the Las Vegas Folk Arts Survey there were two public presentations of traditional arts. The Cultural Affairs Division of the Clark County Department of Parks and Recreation sponsored a small exhibit of local folk crafts, including Ukrainian Easter eggs, Japanese embroidery, neon signs, Polish papercuts, Hawaiian feather leis and African American quilts. The exhibit proved to be one of the most popular that the community center gallery had hosted; an opening with Hawaiian dance and lei-making, and three weekend demonstrations by featured craftspeople also attracted sizeable crowds. The Cultural and Community Affairs Branch of the Las Vegas Department of Recreation and Leisure Activities presented an evening performance of music and dance from four Las Vegas communities—African American, Native American, Hawaiian and South American—which was also well-received.

The final product of the survey's first year was a folk arts cultural plan, which contains an overview of Las Vegas folk arts and recommendations for their continued support. The major cultural agencies in the area—the city and county, the library system, the state museum, the children's museum, the local arts council and the school district—are all interested in presenting local traditional artists in their facilities and programs, but need assistance to locate and communicate with folk artists and communities. The growing number of grass-roots ethnic and cultural groups want a wider audience, but need help in organizing and raising money. Both the cultural agencies and the grass-roots groups are willing to forge partnerships to get things done, and in fact several such team efforts are already happening. For example,

Hawaiian/Pacific Island festival co-sponsored by the city and the Hawaiian Club has been very successful, with the city contributing the use of a park and stage and the club doing the programming.

The report's main recommendation was that a full-time folklorist for Las Vegas/Clark County would be the best way to guarantee continued support for the traditional arts. There is still an enormous need for field-work to locate and document artists and communities; NSCA's survey has barely scratched the surface. There is also demand for technical assistance by grass-roots organizations and artists, program guidance for mainstream organizations wanting to include local traditional arts, and communication among all groups to improve access to resources and reduce duplication of efforts.

During the second year of the Las Vegas Folk Arts Project, NSCA will work with the four co-sponsoring organizations to present a two-day folklife festival in May of 1993 in a city park, organize a larger exhibit of craft traditions at the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society and publish an illustrated book with essays by the two NSCA field-workers on aspects of Las Vegas folklore. With the inclusion of artists from all groups, and the help of numerous ethnic and community clubs in planning and carrying out the events, the festival has the potential to become a real community celebration. The arts council can't continue to organize it each year—there are many unexplored areas of the state that beckon, and the council has already gotten requests from groups in Reno to do a similar project there—but with sufficient interest and support the local groups may decide to carry it on. Again, the presence of a folklorist in Las Vegas would help an effort like this immeasurably.

Even now, after only a year and a half of involvement in Las Vegas's folk communities, this project has proved extremely beneficial. The arts council is aware

of numerous new groups and individual artists in ethnic, religious and occupational communities, and those groups are in turn aware of the arts council and how it can help them with organization, programming and funding. Through continued cooperation and communication with the mainstream cultural agencies, we can pass on information about folk artists, their needs and how they can fit into the Las Vegas cultural scene. And there are clearly needs crying out to be met, such as free rehearsal space and sales outlets provided by people who understand and respect folk arts, funding for grass-roots groups to present their own culture and non-commercial venues for folk music and dance. The cultural and governmental agencies in southern Nevada are just beginning a major cultural planning process, into which this information will be fed as a starting point for a more thorough and inclusive assessment of needs and opportunities.

During the Las Vegas Folk Arts Survey, the combination of federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, folk arts expertise from the Nevada State Council on the Arts and local contacts and resources from the Las Vegas community has made for an ideal partnership. Although the initial idea came from the

state, not the local level, the interest was already there and local groups were involved from the start. This makes long-term commitment to folk arts programs more likely.

For all its difficulties and frustrations, Las Vegas really does have a pioneering spirit, and individuals and small groups can have a large impact because none of this has been tried before. We have a wonderful opportunity to fight cultural homogenization and neighborhood fragmentation by helping build a true community—a community of cultures that respect and honor themselves and each other. That is admittedly an uphill fight when the competition is slot machines, showgirls and the attitude that Nevada is a cultural desert. But it also makes the small successes all the more sweet, and forces us to be inclusive rather than exclusive in fostering and supporting arts of all kinds. ■

Andrea Graham has been director of the Folk Arts Program at the Nevada State Council on the Arts since 1990. She has worked for regional and state folklore programs in Virginia, Tennessee and Florida, and as a free-lance folklorist and writer in Nevada.



The Newcomers Project in New England



❖ The Newcomers Project provides professional development for Cambodian music and dance troupes in New England. Chan Moly Sam is shown here working with students on *kbach* (postures) of Cambodian court dance during a workshop at Jacob's Pillow.

Photo by Cecily Cook

by Michael Levine

In 1989, the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) established the Newcomers Project to help recently arrived traditional performing arts groups reach audiences outside their own communities. Under the direction of Betsy Peterson, NEFA's director of Traditional Arts, the project focused initially on the Southeast Asian community and is now poised to reach Caribbean and Latino performing groups as well.

Through this project NEFA is developing forums for presenting the traditional cultures of immigrant populations, and forging new partnerships with both the public and private sectors in the process. Though focused specifically on New England, it has brought people together from half a world apart.

The Newcomers Project is really about the survival of a foreign culture's performing arts tradition in the context of twenty-first century American society. Some of the world's finest dancers and musicians have settled here, but they have lacked the skills to negotiate our arts infrastructure to reach the American public. Faced with the everyday demands of adjusting to a new life, they have little time to rehearse or teach their skills to a new generation. Even within their communities the demand for performances is often limited to specific holidays, and there is little in the way of local funding to support their efforts.

This has been painfully apparent in the refugee Cambodian community. From 1975 to 1979, when the Khmer Rouge controlled Cambodia, almost 90 percent of the dancers and musicians perished or fled the country. In refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border, Cambodian folk and classical dance students received training in traditions reaching back to the ninth century. Many of these individuals have found their way to the United States, settling in communities scattered from coast to coast.

The Newcomers Project grew out of work begun by the Refugee Arts Group in the mid-1980s. This Boston-based group, which was a coalition of artists, scholars, refugee support professionals and educators, was formed to see that "the expressive arts and culture of the homelands are not forgotten, and to celebrate cultural diversity through the arts." With funding from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities and the NEA Folk Arts Program, the Refugee Arts Group surveyed the Bay State to find Southeast Asian artists.

Soon after, NEFA received a \$35,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to launch the Newcomers Project. Phase One was specifically designed to assist Southeast Asian groups by providing technical assistance related to self-presentation and publicity, and by helping arrange performances outside the immigrant community. Though the initial work included a Laotian group, the project concentrated on three groups of Cambodians: the Angkor Dance Troupe in Lowell, Massachusetts; the Cambodian Traditional Music Ensemble in Providence, Rhode Island; and the Khmer Performing Arts Ensemble of Niantic, Connecticut. The two dance troupes perform both the traditional court dances and a repertory of folk dances, which were developed at the University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh in the 1960s. The music ensemble performs a variety of musical styles from the Cambodian countryside.

❖ Building New Audiences

The Newcomers Project is based on the premise that these groups need to build American audiences in order to survive and grow. When performed for Cambodian audiences, the dance and music of Cambodia need little or no explanation. In the case of dance, many Cambodians know the Ramayana story on which much of the court repertory is based. Both court and folk dances are

accompanied by sung texts that narrate what is going on in the dance. Since mainstream western audiences won't know the Khmer or the Ramayana story, it is essential to provide interpretive materials or a presenter to help them understand and appreciate the art form.

These groups also need assistance in learning to present themselves to potential sponsors, through written materials and auditions. Through the Newcomer's Project, NEFA has offered ongoing consultation on financial, business and management issues; assisted in techniques of group presentation, staging and technical production; provided funds that allowed each group to produce detailed publicity packets; funded the purchase of costumes and prop production; and offered fee subsidies to potential sponsors around the region. In addition, NEFA showcased several of the groups at a New England-wide "Presenting the Folk Arts" Conference.

❖ Partners with Jacob's Pillow

While the project has accomplished many of its original goals, its most significant impact may result from a joint venture between NEFA and the nationally renowned Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival of Becket, Massachusetts. Through this continuing partnership, Jacob's Pillow is committed to working with the Cambodian community for several years. In 1991 the Festival offered four consecutive weekends of Cambodian dance workshops. These workshops brought together dozens of students and master teachers for lectures, rehearsals and public performances of classical and folk dances accompanied by live music. The Jacob's Pillow component has been funded by the Ford Foundation, the Mott Foundation, an NEA Folk Arts grant and the Asian Cultural Council.

"I can pinpoint our turnaround to that first summer at Jacob's Pillow," recalls George Chigas, manager of the Angkor Dance Troupe. "We had a chance to

step out of our everyday existence and focus on the dance. Our group had been floundering and it gave us a chance to develop a professionalism, both artistically and in managerial style.

"Equally important, the workshop showed a recognition by the non-Cambodian community of the legitimacy of our art form."

Thoeun Thou, a dancer and teacher with the Angkor Dance Troupe, echoes that sentiment. "No one ever thought of us before the Jacob's Pillow workshops. Now we have many more chances to share our culture."

"The strength of this project," explains Jacob's Pillow Executive Director Sam Miller, "is that we did not want to impose any prior objectives. We simply used our physical and human resources to create an environment and a context where multilevel exchanges could take place."

The first year brought together Cambodian dance masters and community members from around the country. For the summer of 1992, the program expanded to include several professors from the University of Phnom Penh.

"We came to realize that there is no place where the complete repertoire of Cambodian dance resides," Miller continued. "Keep in mind that these dances have historically been taught by apprenticeships and handed down through the generations. In some cases, one individual would devote his or her entire life to performing a particular role. Because of the tragic upheavals caused by the Khmer Rouge, some of the classic characters in Cambodian dance have been endangered. It became apparent that this was not simply a refugee project, but one of cultural preservation."

As Cecily Cook, director of the Refugee Arts Group explains, "Cambodian dance became democratized in the refugee camps. The masters were there offer-



Cambodian musicians from throughout the United States were invited to Jacob's Pillow to accompany Cambodian dancers during a week-long workshop held in conjunction with the Newcomers Project.

Photo by Cecily Cook

ing classes and anyone in the camps could study. But this knowledge is not always passed on to the best artists. That's why the exchange between refugees here and the surviving artists in Cambodia is so important."

"This has proved to be a very successful project," observes Ralph Samuelson, executive director of the Asian Cultural Council (ACC), based in New York City. "I give Jacob's Pillow a lot of credit for understanding what it was dealing with. It's hard for general arts institutions to relate to traditional arts—understanding their needs, creating an encouraging atmosphere and offering help and respect for the culture. At the ACC, we support cultural exchange in the visual and performing arts. With this project we knew the key artists and the institution involved, and we could clearly see that it was revitalizing ties with the people in Cambodia. This is an essential ingredient in preserving Cambodian culture."

"We really took our cues from the participants," reflects Miller. "For instance, we offered some lighting or staging ideas and then worked with them to see what best met their needs. Ultimately it was about improving the quality of their presentation, and the collaboration worked."

❖ Balancing Art and Life

Tithtra Soch is a 25-year-old dancer and musician who was trained in the refugee camps before his parents settled in Rhode Island in 1985. He attended the Jacob's Pillow workshops both years and is very enthusiastic about the experience. His parents are both musicians, and until their recent divorce the family performed together. Over the past few years, Tithtra has been trying to develop and manage the Cambodian Traditional Music Ensemble. He knows how important it is to keep the art forms alive, because "without the music and dance, when people picture Cambodia they only think of war."

Yet, Tithtra has now given up playing music and dancing. "My instruments decorate the wall," he says. Like so many young Cambodians in this country, he has realized how little opportunity there is to make a living through his traditional arts. In pursuit of a fine arts degree, he works at the local textile mill just long enough to earn a semester's tuition. Tithtra wonders whether he will even attend Jacob's Pillow next summer. "I have to ask, 'Can I use this education towards my support?' If not, then I can't take the time to do it."

Tithtra also faced constant frustration while trying to organize the ensemble. Cambodian musicians are in great demand for playing at weddings within the Cambodian community. Traditional songs are played during certain parts of the wedding ceremony in the morning, while at night modern Cambodian rock music is the choice for receptions. The problem Tithtra faced is that many of the young people just want to play the modern music because they get paid more for it and don't need to rehearse as long. He found there was even less interest in playing the traditional music for American audiences since this meant leaving the community, earning very little money and getting hired to play at odd times. Many of their bookings were for school assemblies or midweek evening concerts.

"People can't keep begging time off from their shift supervisor to play these jobs," Tithtra continued. "It became impossible to commit to bookings so far in advance.

"In Cambodia, one person can work and earn enough to support ten people," Tithtra reflected. "But here, one person can barely support himself. I don't know anyone in my community who works just eight hours [a day], usually it is ten- or twelve-hour shifts at the factory all week. And on Saturday eight hours more. No choice. You work overtime or they fire you. It leaves

no time for family, no time to relax and certainly no time to enjoy making music."

"I think it's very hard to save our culture. Maybe if I could teach kids in the schools to dance, show them how to make traditional costumes, and teach them Cambodian ways, like New Year's games, or history. If there was some funding for it to happen four or five times a month, then I could support my education without the factory."

Restoring Pride in Cambodian Culture

As artistic director of the Khmer Performing Arts Ensemble, Sokhanarith Moeur is also very familiar with the difficulty of keeping a troupe together. Moeur, who performs both Cambodian classical and folk dances, emigrated from Thailand in 1987 and now lives in Connecticut. Prior to the Pol Pot regime she was a professor of dance at the University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh. With the assistance of NEFA's Newcomers Project her group has undergone remarkable professional development, and recently was added to the touring roster of the Connecticut Commission on the Arts.

Moeur believes the Newcomers Project has been extremely beneficial. "I want to accomplish two goals through my art," she explains. "First, I want to restore a pride and understanding in Cambodian culture for the Cambodian people in America, especially the kids who have been born here. Second, I want to have Americans understand what our culture looks like and what it is about. Betsy [Peterson] and Cecily [Cook] have helped us to perform for many new audiences."

Moeur believes the Jacob's Pillow experiences have been crucial to achieving both goals. Because the Cambodian artists around New England live in several scattered communities, they cannot get together for regular rehearsals. "When we do have performances," she ad-

mits, "the music and dance are not consistent, and I don't feel good about what we are showing people."

"But at Jacob's Pillow, there was plenty of time to work together. It was great."

As it becomes more difficult to find the musicians available who can play the traditional Cambodian dance tunes, the dancers are relying increasingly on tapes. As part of the Newcomers Project, the dancers now have a professional music recording, which was made during the 1992 Jacob's Pillow workshops.

"In the past, music has been a big concern," describes Chigas of the Angkor Dance Troupe. "We needed live music and it was difficult and expensive to use. Sometimes we would meet only an hour before the performance and run through the program. Variations in tempo would surface during the dances and it was a big aggravation. Now that we have good tapes, we prefer to use them. Besides, the logistics and cost are a lot easier for the arts presenters if we don't bring ten musicians."

There is no doubt that the Angkor Dance Troupe is the most successful group of artists in the Newcomers Program to date. They have been added to the NEFA Touring Roster, acquired a costume inventory, hold regular practices, improved their record keeping and financial management, and developed a repertoire that is well-suited to American audiences unfamiliar with their traditions. Yet, until recently when the troupe received its first grant of \$20,000 from the Parker Foundation in Lowell, the group's artistic and administrative management was a completely volunteer effort.

"Now," Chigas continued, "we will be able to pay several instructors and our dance manager for things like pre-planning rehearsals so the few hours a week we have with our troupe can be more productive."

Ironically, even as the group is finally getting on solid footing, they face new challenges. The free re-

hearsal space they had been using at the National Historic Park in Lowell has been closed due to budget cuts, and there is a constant problem with student turnover.

"We always have plenty of female dancers available; however, after graduation from high school we lose them. Some go off to college, others work at the factories and many get married and are forbidden by their husbands to continue dancing. Teenage boys, on the other hand, rarely show any interest."

Because the troupe relies on students, bookings are limited to weekends and must be within easy driving distance of their Lowell community. Otherwise, parents are not inclined to let their children participate.

"I feel strongly about showing our culture to other nationalities," Angkor dancer Thoeun says. "But I am worried about the future of this dance. I know performances are coming, but there is very little money. I have no answers, and I worry."

Perhaps the next phase of the Jacob's Pillow residency will provide some needed tools to the Cambodian community. In the summer of 1993, intensive weekend workshops will be offered in Lowell and a few other selected communities around the region. The internationally renowned faculty assembled at Jacob's Pillow will be leading these sessions specifically for those who can not afford the time to attend the week-long offerings.

❖ First Night

"I saw the training at Jacob's Pillow and knew the performances had a place on our program," exclaimed Zeren Earls, who has served as both executive director and artistic director of First Night Boston since 1980. "It's very important to me to bring the rich traditions of many immigrant cultures to a mainstream audience such as we have at First Night. I also feel it is essential to include

newcomers in our programs as a way of welcoming them to our community."

In 1991 Earls presented the Khmer Performing Arts Ensemble in a special program at the largest theatre space in the city. As part of the Columbus Quincentennial she brought together half a dozen dance troupes in a tribute honoring America's diverse heritage. "As part of that continuum, it was natural to have some of our newest Americans represented. We filled the hall twice," she reported, "and this year the Khmer returned to our program with a stage to themselves."

"Our average audience member has no knowledge of the dance tradition in Cambodia, yet they are clearly moved by the exquisite form of the dancers. I work with a lot of communities around Boston, and the professionalism that the Cambodians have achieved as a result of the Newcomers Project is remarkable. There is a definite role for the NEFAs of this world."

❖ Breaking New Ground

Clearly, the Newcomers Project is breaking new ground. According to Daniel Sheehy, director of the NEA's Folk Arts Program, "Jacob's Pillow has provided a working model of ways in which arts institutions or artists' colonies can provide a setting for immigrant artists to work with original masters. This really addresses a need identified at the World Classical Performing Arts Conference in 1991. The involvement in this project of a national leader like Jacob's Pillow sends an important signal to producers and presenters across the country and offers the Cambodian community a visibility far beyond the region."

"In one year, I've seen a striking difference in the Cambodian performances. This is evident both in their props and stage sets, as well as in meeting the expectations of an American audience in terms of timing, pacing and packaging."

"In a very direct way," Sheehy continues, "this NEFA project reinforces the Folk Arts Program's goal of increasing access for all Americans to each other. We can't hope to be fluent in the hundreds of cultures that are part of our American society today. However, experiences we gain as audience members give us a glimpse at the core values of a people as expressed through their arts."

For the audience, Sheehy believes, each new experience raises a question and challenges us to think about what it means and why it is there. In this regard he says, "there is a lot in common between avant garde and folk art. They are both challenging and the audiences need guidance."

Despite the problems faced by all the Cambodian artists, everyone agrees the Newcomers Project has succeeded in providing a framework that allows them to reach new audiences. It has also woven a wonderful pattern of partnerships that can serve as models for programs nationwide.

As NEFA's Peterson describes it, "This is such a nice example of how two organizations develop separate programs that mutually strengthen and reinforce each other. The Cambodian programs at Jacob's Pillow could not have occurred without the prior ground-breaking work of NEFA's Newcomers Project. Conversely, the Jacob's Pillow programs were a truly inspiring opportunity for the Cambodian students. All in all, it's one of those 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts' experiences." ■

Michael Levine is the public information officer at the Vermont Council on the Arts. He is a former free-lance journalist and broadcast professional.

About NEFA

The New England Foundation for the Arts is a regional consortium of the six New England state arts councils (Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont) created over 15 years ago to support and develop the arts in New England. The foundation's mission is to connect the people of New England with the power of art to shape lives and improve communities. Public and private partnerships are developed by the foundation to support the creation and presentation of art by artists and diverse art organizations. Its goals are pursued through a variety of programs and services, which include information exchange, policy planning, research, advocacy and direct financial assistance.



The Down Home Dairyland Saga



Arthur "Zeke" Renard, Belgian button accordion player from Duval, Wisconsin, being recorded and interviewed for "Down Home Dairyland," a radio program created by the Wisconsin Arts Board to serve the traditional and ethnic musicians in the state.

Photo by Richard March

by Richard March

The VFW Hall in Janesville, Wisconsin, sits on top of a high hill on the south side of town. For the famously flat Midwest, the hill commands a spectacular view overlooking the sprawling linear buildings of the General Motors plant, the small city's largest employer. The factory is surrounded by a web of high voltage power lines, while in the distance the rolling green countryside is dotted with the farmsteads of dairy producers, their massive barns flanked by towering silos.

The VFW Hall is a friendly gathering place for the farmers, autoworkers and others from the Janesville area. Rock County and Green County residents of German, Swiss, Norwegian, Polish and Irish descent use the hall to nurture their traditions, celebrate weddings and anniversaries and put on lodge functions and community benefit affairs. They are the kind of people whose artistic interests and needs have seldom been addressed by state arts agencies, even though they and millions of others from the smaller cities and rural areas of the Upper Midwest have created their own expressive culture. Their culture and its expression through the music and dance in this hall is at once unified and pluralistic, urban and rural, rooted in tradition yet forward-looking.

In the fall of 1986 I drove with my colleague Jim Leary 40 miles southeast from home in Madison to take in a rare musical experience. We had noticed in the Wisconsin Polka Boosters newsletter that the New Jolly Swiss Boys—Syl Liebl, Jr.'s band from Coon Valley, Wisconsin—would be in Janesville. Syl Liebl, Sr., the legendary concertina player, would be sitting in. We jumped at the chance to hear and meet this immensely influential, but now mostly retired, musician.

The dance was in full swing when we arrived. The final flourish of a Dutchman-style polka tune was just fading and the spinning dancers' skirts still settling as we walked in. The two Syls and the Swiss Boys were on

stage taking a moment's pause and preparing to play a set of three waltzes. Anxious to meet the elder Liebl, we strode toward the stage. By the time we reached the middle of the dance floor, I was recognized by Archie Baron, a dairy farmer and the polka promoter who had booked this dance.

"Hey Rick, it's great to see you here," he beamed. "Would you like an introduction?" Assuming he was going to introduce me to Syl Liebl, Sr., I nodded assent. Archie sprang to the stage, snatched a microphone from its stand and announced, "Hey everybody, look who's here—Rick March of 'Down Home Dairyland' radio!" I stood frozen in surprise as a hearty ripple of applause filled the hall.

❖ Discovering Listeners

For about two months the Wisconsin Arts Board (WAB), where I am the traditional and ethnic arts coordinator, had been producing "Down Home Dairyland," which at that time was a three-hour Monday morning radio show on WORT, Madison's listener-supported community radio. The show featured the traditional and ethnic music of Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest, with an emphasis on polkas. It had never occurred to me that we might have listeners in Janesville!

The incident marked my in-person debut as a radio personality in Wisconsin. It had been hard to explain to most people just what I did for WAB and how it might relate to them. But everybody knew what a radio deejay was! During the afternoon a few listeners approached me with comments such as, "I liked that feature you did on Romy Gosz. How can I get a tape of it?," "Will you play for me that 'Let's Have a Party' tune by Chuck Thiel and the Jolly Ramblers?"

Now I had some confirmation that my radio idea was actually working. It was initially viewed by some

of my arts administrator colleagues as totally off-the-wall and a crazy departure from the normal functioning of a state arts agency. But this incident and others over the ensuing months convinced me there were indeed listeners out there. Old-time and ethnic musicians pressed copies of their recordings into my hand or sent them by mail, all with the same request—"Please play it on your radio show." Handwritten letters and cards trickled in, saying: "I listen to you in the truck on my postal route. Could you play a Greg Anderson yodel number?" and "Please play 'Red Raven Polka' by Lawrence Duchow and dedicate it to my parents Erwin and Mary Ann Krause for their 40th wedding anniversary."

❖ Midwestern Old-Time Music

"Down Home Dairyland" was created in 1986 when WORT needed a volunteer folk music programmer for the three-hour Monday morning slot. I had just completed my third year as traditional and ethnic arts coordinator for the Wisconsin Arts Board. In that time the Folk Arts Program was working within the normal framework of a state arts agency. We had set up a Folk Arts Apprenticeship program that focused upon the traditions of Wisconsin's Indian tribes, developed folk artists in the schools activities and created a Folk Arts Organizational Projects grant category.

While the programs were going well, we were disturbed that we were not serving some very important segments of our constituency, notably traditional and ethnic musicians and the communities that comprise their audiences. The Upper Midwest has vibrant and diverse musical subcultures, based on an interplay of ethnic, regional and vernacular musical forms. Unlike the better-known folk musics of Appalachia, the Southwest or New England, Midwestern old-time music has few advocates in cultural institutions or the media. However,

these musical traditions are too important to ignore. Just as blues, jazz, country music and rock are a synthesis of the traditional music of the South's predominant Anglo-Celtic and African American populations, Upper Midwestern folk music is a synthesis drawn from the many groups who settled Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, the eastern Dakotas, northern Iowa, Indiana and Illinois. The region's music, like its culture in general, offers some distinct variations of an ethnic stew in which the individual ingredients never lose their identifiable origin.

One example out of the dozens that could be cited are the Walloon Belgians of Door County, Wisconsin, who have retained their unique French Walloon dialect through five generations in America. Singers perform today the traditional songs their forebears brought over from Namur, Belgium, in the 1850s and 1860s. But this devotion to Belgian traditions didn't stop Walloon band leaders from adopting the unique style of brass band music played by their Czech-American neighbors. In this area of northeastern Wisconsin the Czech (actually the locals usually call it "Bohemian") style was adopted also by bandleaders with Polish, Dutch and German ethnic backgrounds.

That particular Wisconsin Bohemian sound had German-American trumpeter Roman Gosz as its most seminal figure. His 78 rpm recordings, with the vocals in Czech, still comprise the core repertoire of today's numerous Bohemian, or "Gosz-style" bands. Currently one of the finest professional singers of the old Czech songs is Cletus Bellin, a radio station manager and polka disc jockey from Kewaunee, Wisconsin. A proud promoter of his Belgian heritage, Bellin, who speaks Walloon fluently, also took the time to learn the correct Czech pronunciation from friends in nearby Pilsen.

When Bellin plays piano and sings as a member of the Jerry Voelker Orchestra of Green Bay, the

band may perform in addition to their core repertoire of Czech and German tunes (plus country and western numbers), a Norwegian schottische, a Finnish waltz, a Polish *oberek*, a “modern” Glenn Miller swing tune or a 1960s rock oldie without ever departing from the underlying regional Bohemian band’s style or playing repertoire that is considered unusual or intrusive.

❖ Learning to Respond to Different Needs

During the 1980s, the WAB grants mechanism had not been effective in gaining wider recognition for the significant art of Upper Midwestern traditional musicians. They couldn’t apply for organizational grants, because the bands are small businesses, as opposed to nonprofit organizations. Individual musicians weren’t interested in apprenticeship grants since the younger musicians normally learn by listening to recordings, watching bands, sitting in, jamming and getting hired as sidemen.

The few nonprofit organizations who actually did apply for grants to present this type of music didn’t fare very well with the arts board’s music panel of that time. When WXPR, community radio from the little town of Rhinelander in northern Wisconsin, applied to present a live performance by the fine young Finnish-American band, the Oulu Hotshots from Iron River, one WAB panelist cast a disparaging remark regarding *that* type of music. (The Oulu Hotshots went on to make several recordings and gained national exposure through multiple appearances on Garrison Keillor’s radio show, “A Prairie Home Companion.”)

I spoke to the musicians and dance club members who were stymied in the grants realm. What did they need from WAB? It turned out that obtaining grants was not their highest priority. They wanted more recognition, respect and media exposure. They felt that pop music and the Nashville sound had all but squeezed

them out of the media. They were right. In commercial radio they were off the air, except for a polka hour here and there on a few small town AM stations, perhaps sharing the hour with the noon livestock prices report.

Based on the University of Wisconsin campus, Wisconsin Public Radio (call letters WHA) is currently celebrating its 75th year of serving the state by broadcasting educational and cultural programming. WHA programming emphasizes classical music, National Public Radio and talk programs. The few hours per week of folk programming was divided between contemporary singer-songwriters and traditional music from the American South or the British Isles. Recordings of Upper Midwestern traditional musicians, even those from the Madison area (local to the main studios), were rare as hen’s teeth in the WHA record library.

These neglected musical traditions needed the validation that would come with inclusion on public radio. Fortunately, an item in WAB’s five-year plan called for enhancing the arts board’s presence in the media. To his credit, the arts board director committed the agency to trying the radio experiment. The agency took the open time slot on the local station WORT, which is heard in a 50-mile radius of Madison. I learned to operate the studio equipment, got my FCC license and started broadcasting.

❖ Wisconsin Public Radio

After a year the arts board’s WORT programs had been noticed by WHA Folk Music Programmer Tom Martin-Erickson and he was interested in collaborating. It was a great opportunity. The WHA network could be heard statewide (even in areas of neighboring states), and the association with Wisconsin Public Radio carried with it the status and respect that could help validate Upper Midwestern traditions.

Everyone benefited from the collaboration. The arts board provided my time—officially 10 percent of my 40-hour work week, though it was often more. Wisconsin Public Radio provided studio facilities, an engineer and the assistance of Tom Martin-Erickson. And so WHA gained unique, locally-produced programming, and the arts board gained media exposure and a chance to do more for underserved constituents.

With a grant from the Folk Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, free-lance folklorist Jim Leary was able to join me in producing a series of 13 half-hour programs. These programs, each devoted to the music of a particular ethnic group, geographic area or instrument, blended excerpts from field interviews of traditional musicians with their music.

The first series on WHA premiered in early 1989. In this series and those that followed, Jim and I made a sincere effort to truly reflect the cultural diversity of the Upper Midwest with programs that focused on an African American gospel quartet, a Milwaukee Puerto Rican *jibaro* ensemble, Hmong and Cambodian traditions in Wisconsin and the many forms of Wisconsin Indian music.

Wisconsin is a state where over 90 percent of the population is Euro-American, and most of these people are uncomfortable being lumped together in an official, homogenized “white” identity. Thus, the specific traditions of groups such as Slovenians, Welsh, Finns, Norwegians, Germans and Poles, and the ways their ethnic traits interacted and recombined in the Midwest were treated in many of the programs: “Echoes of Slovenia,” “Finnish-American Music in Superiorland” and “The Polish Fiddlers of Posen.”

Though the topic is serious and the music is good, by its inclusiveness “Down Home Dairyland” challenges the fixed notions of many of our listeners and

radio cohorts. At WORT I had to buck the dominant counter-cultural bias, and assert that, in addition to the “granola eaters,” older folks and farmers are indeed part of the community WORT should serve. Some of these farmers and older folks have had to stretch to appreciate the unfamiliar music of relative newcomers like Puerto Ricans and Hmong, and accept the newcomers’ contributions as a new part of Wisconsin’s tradition.

But there was also a lot of positive reaction. The *Milwaukee Magazine* touted “Down Home Dairyland” as the “Media Pick of the Month” in March 1989, saying, “This is music to soothe the souls of even the most harried postmoderns.” *Isthmus*, a Madison news-weekly strong on arts and entertainment, regularly lists the programs in their “Radio Highlights” section, sometimes with humorous comments like, “We don’t know what a *masopust* is, but we do know it’s survived in Wisconsin for more than a century.” [Incidentally, *Masopust* is the Czech pre-Lenten festivity.] More important were the letters from appreciative listeners, with comments like, “I loved the Women Polka Bandleaders show! Keep up the good work.” and “My father used to play his fiddle in a band, the Uncle Louie Orchestra. Would you be interested in them for ‘Down Home Dairyland?’”

It is also gratifying to have a chance to get acquainted with the musicians, and though they don’t say a lot about it, to know they are happy with the show. Over a couple of beers in plastic cups, elbows on the plank that served as a bar in the rear corner of a polka festival dance tent, two musicians mentioned a WAB show on German-American music in which they were featured. “Rick, I owe you one,” one of them said.

❖ And the Saga Continues

Though WAB’s initial intention was to make one series comprising 13 programs, popular support spurred us to

make 27 more in the period from 1989 to 1992 for a total of 40 programs. Audio cassettes of these programs are available and have been purchased at a steady rate by individuals, teachers and professors, public libraries, school libraries and major archives like the Library of Congress, the Center for Popular Music and the Country Music Foundation. Through these cassettes, the artists and the special music that "Down Home Dairyland" showcases are heard beyond the limits of radio transmission.

Forthcoming from the University of Wisconsin Division of University Outreach is another spin-off product, *Down Home Dairyland: A Listener's Guide*, co-authored by Jim Leary and myself. The 100-page booklet will provide short essays, photographs and bibliographical information for the musical traditions covered in the 40 programs (1989-1992). The guide enhances the usefulness of the programs as educational curriculum materials, and Jim is devising continuing education correspondence courses that will target teachers and make use of the audiocassettes and the guide.

In early 1992, to consolidate listenership, the WHA program director asked WAB if "Down Home Dairyland" could run 52 weeks per year as a part of their Sunday evening "Old Time Radio Night." With some trepidation we accepted the challenge. To make it possible to produce about 39 shows per year (the remaining weeks will feature reruns), we adopted a magazine format featuring a variety of traditions in each program. Though we are not able to present excerpts from field-recorded interviews each week, "Down Home Dairyland" now casts a broader net by bringing in artists from farther afield in the Midwest, and elsewhere in the country and Canada. We can also be more timely in responding to listener requests and inquiries, because the time between production and broadcast is shorter.

The show is more established and continues to receive plaudits. Nick Spitzer, producer of the Folk Masters concerts and broadcasts from Carnegie Hall and Wolf Trap, uses segments from "Down Home Dairyland" as instructional examples in his radio production workshops.

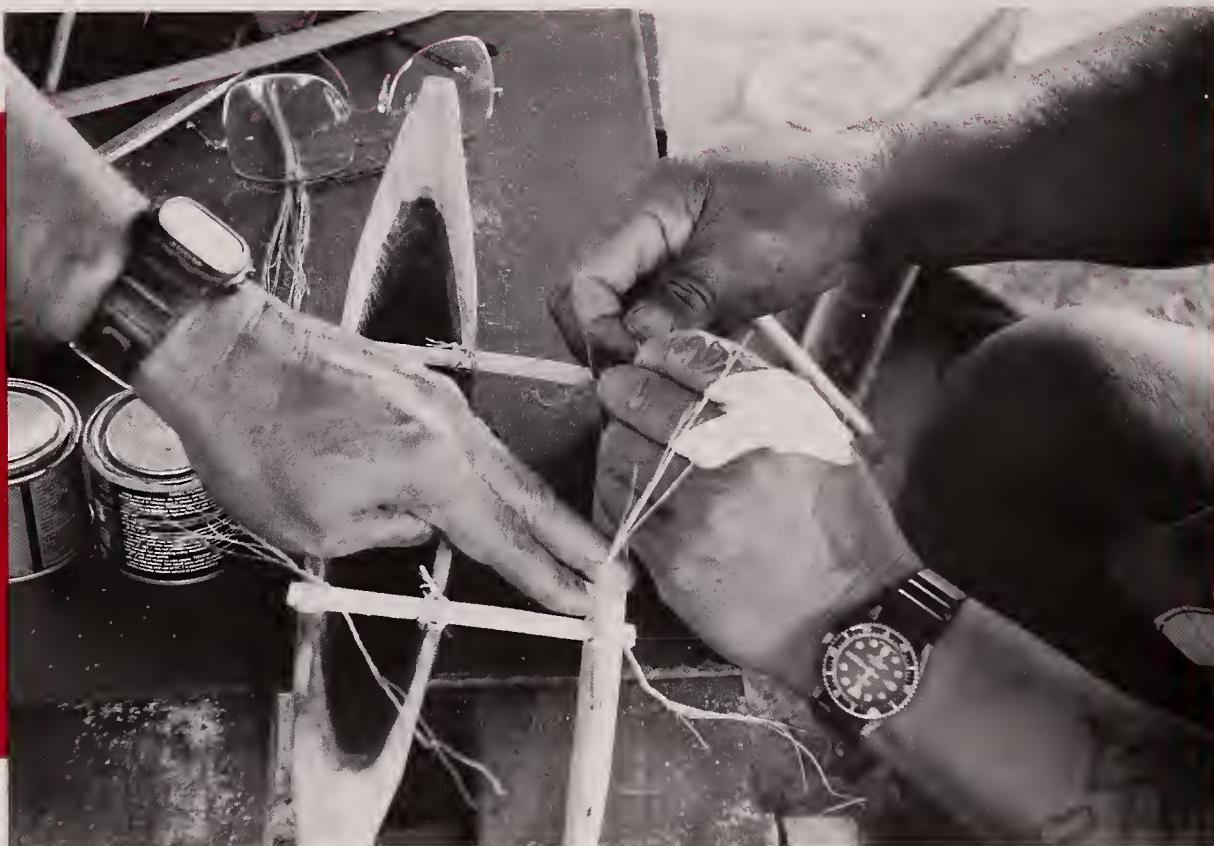
But it is of greater significance that "Down Home Dairyland" has been one factor in a growing appreciation of Upper Midwestern musical traditions. In recent years the NEA has awarded National Heritage Fellowships to some of the finest Upper Midwestern old-time musicians: Wisconsin's Louie Bashell, Michigan's Art Moilanen and Minnesota's Christie Hengel. Other Wisconsin polka bands have been well received recently in the nation's capitol: Brian and the Mississippi Valley Dutchmen had an enthusiastic reception at the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife in 1991, and the Jerry Schneider Orchestra appeared at the Kennedy Center in 1992.

Through "Down Home Dairyland," the Wisconsin Arts Board maintains a higher profile with a regular media product serving a specific artistic need. Moreover, both the program's inclusiveness and the traditional musicians' eclectic intermingling of ethnic, regional and vernacular content provide a concrete example of a regional culture dealing positively with pluralism. ■

Richard March has been on the staff of the Wisconsin Arts Board since 1983. He has a Doctorate of Folklore from Indiana University and plays such diverse instruments as the diatonic button accordion and the tamburitza. For the past 18 years he has collaborated with the Smithsonian Institution on various folklife programs. He also assists the Library of Congress in the preparation of the annual Select List of Folk Music Recordings, and is on the advisory board of the Fund for Folk Culture, a national folk arts philanthropy.



Creative Marriages: Traditional Arts Apprenticeships



In American Samoa, the state arts agency is working with the Samoans to set up apprenticeships with master artists to ensure that endangered craft skills, such as canoe building, do not vanish. Here two men work on a model canoe, demonstrating the intricate skills of lashing a canoe.

Photo by Lynn Martin

by Bess Lomax Hawes and Barry Bergey

The development of an artist is by no means a straightforward matter of the acquisition of information and the mastery of technique. The novice must also acquire that elusive component of all great art—style. Style means not just *what* notes are played, but *how* they are played; how the colors and textures in a painting relate to one another; how a singer's vocal chords widen or constrict; how and when a dancer's feet step or point. Learning style isn't easy nor, as some people think, automatic. No less a master than Leonard Bernstein once observed that the only way classical musicians can acquire the final burnishing essential to outstanding performances is by being allowed direct association with senior artists of stature; in other words, through some kind of apprenticing, where the subtle and continuous line of decisions artists must make can be jointly confronted. The classical musician must learn that extra essential dimension, which can't be written down on the score; they, like other artists, must learn *style*. And nowadays not just one style, but the several varied styles expected of the well-trained concert musician.

By contrast the field of folk arts encompasses not a few, but hundreds, even thousands, of directly replicated styles of music, as well as dance, singing, story telling, pot-throwing, basket-weaving—artistic behaviors of all types. For in the traditional folk arts, essence is revealed by the particular—specificity is everything. What is this basket made of? What is its use? Which tribe owns this dance? Who sings this song? On what occasions? Each traditional artistic item, each traditional artistic event is the cherished production of a particular group and it represents its values, its concerns, its actual being. In very real ways the style itself contains, indeed is, the message.

❖ Traditional Arts Apprenticing

The term *apprenticing* has a long and complex history. In the general field of the arts it is important to realize that it has an informal, rather than legal, usage. It has nothing to do with the nationally codified and union-approved training of, for example, building tradesmen like plumbers, bricklayers or carpenters through the general stages of apprentice, journeyman and master. In folk arts the terms master and apprentice represent a particular kind of creative marriage, a joining together of the experienced hand and the eager learner to ensure that the tradition is maintained as accurately as can be and that the old ideas get a respectful hearing.

This can and does happen sometimes in a school room. But where shifting groups of small cultures continually jostle for their place in the sun, large-scale training programs like classes and workshops tend to be ineffective, except perhaps in an introductory capacity. In the traditional arts, apprenticeships are ultimately much more productive. This is why from its very beginning in 1977 the NEA Folk Arts Program included a modest funding provision for the support of apprenticeships.

❖ State Apprenticeship Programs

At first the Folk Arts Program funded individual apprenticeships directly, but eventually this approach was abandoned due to the general inefficiency of administering at the federal level dozens of small, geographically-dispersed, individual grants. In 1984 the Folk Arts Program initiated a pilot, state-based, apprenticeship funding category intended to encourage the perpetuation of distinct folk artistic traditions. This new program sought state partners, most frequently state arts agencies, that were able to draw on the expertise and energies of state folk arts coordinators, as well as locate matching moneys. Twelve states participated in the initial year of this pilot

effort. Thirty-six states now conduct active apprenticeship programs, assisting apprenticeships in art forms such as Ukrainian weaving, Mississippi blues, cowboy poetry, Cambodian dance, Sioux beadwork of the Northern Plains and Hispanic *santo* carving of the Southwest. Some state arts agencies have even developed spin-off activities from their apprenticeship programs, including both small local presentations of the work accomplished and grander projects such as "Colorado Folk Arts and Artists 1986-1990." This exhibit featured the work of Hispanic, Native American and other Coloradan master/apprentice teams and toured the state in 1992.

❖ The Urban Apprenticeship

To see how apprenticing works in a large urban area we can turn to the District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and Humanities, which set up a pilot folk arts apprenticeship program in 1989. The arts commission is entering its fourth year of apprenticeships in such arts traditions as Bengali *tabla* music, Caribbean steel-drum making and tuning, the song repertoire of Guinea, Afro-Cuban drumming, African American quilt design and technique, the music of the Indian *sitar* and various specialized aspects of African American religious music.

In the commission's current program, D.C.'s last active jubilee-style, spiritual singing quartet, called the Four Echoes, works with the Spiritual Kings of Harmony. The Spiritual Kings is comprised of ex-convicts who formed their group in the local minimum-security prison. Through apprenticing to the Four Echoes, who have been together 47 years, the younger Spiritual Kings of Harmony hope to learn more about their history and cultural tradition, as well as broaden their chances for picking up engagements by acquiring the venerable vocal style that is still greatly appreciated by older D.C. audiences. This apprenticeship with the Spiritual Kings oc-

curs directly after one with Prophecy: Cops for Christ, a gospel quartet of the Washington Metropolitan Police officers. Last year Prophecy worked for many weeks with the Four Echoes to increase their repertoire of traditional spirituals. Prophecy frequently ran through a song or two in the precinct house to the applause of those waiting to be charged. "We were locking them up and giving them the Lord's word at the same time," said the bass-baritone.

In another apprenticeship, the experienced quartet trainer and vocal coach Samuel Hubbard has taken on a contemporary gospel foursome of young black men to help them refine their pitch discrimination, rhythmic precision and general presentation. "Every word is pronounced, from the first to the last," one of the apprentices recently declared in respectful amazement.

A third apprenticeship is being conducted by Deacon Solomon Bouknight, an African American church elder, who leads his congregation every Sunday in the old-fashioned "lining-out" hymn style in which the song leader sings a line that is repeated improvisationally by all those present. The lining-out style dates back to slavery and beyond. The drawn-out, surging phrases are intensely emotional, and many older worshippers feel that if they don't get to sing at least one such song they haven't really been to church.

It is important to note that within the single category of traditional African American religious music, the jubilee, gospel and lining-out styles are three absolutely distinctive stylistic inventions. None of these styles could be learned in a music conservatory, and none of the three masters could substitute for the other.

❖ Fitting the Program to the Culture

Just as single apprenticeships historically have been custom-crafted to meet the needs of the master, the apprentice and the unique needs of the art form, so are state ap-



In Missouri, Mone Saenphimmachak shows apprentice Sithasone Singarath how to count threads for the design of a woven scarf or *pakbiang*.
Photo by Patrick Janson

apprenticeship programs notable for their variety in structure and flexibility of design. These jointly (federal and state) funded programs are of necessity administered by state-based cultural specialists because the apprenticeships require hands-on involvement with individual artists, including contact with prospective applicants and evaluation of ongoing pairings. In most cases apprenticeships are selected through formal application by a rotating, state arts agency-selected panel of cultural specialists, arts administrators and artists. However, other patterns may turn out to be culturally more appropriate. The evident popularity of the NEA Folk Arts Program may in part be due to the flexibility of its rules, which allow wide variation in methodology while simultaneously maintaining clear and precise goals.

The territories of the Pacific provide some striking case-studies of the complexities out of which a working apprenticeship program can emerge. For example, American Samoa is an unincorporated territory of the United States comprising six inhabited islands with a total population of under 40,000, as well as an uninhabited bird sanctuary. Four to five times more Samoans now live in Hawaii and on the West Coast of the mainland than in American Samoa, so the total Samoan population is around two million with a vast disproportion living outside Samoan lifeways and customs. John Enright, the folk arts coordinator at the American Samoa Arts Council, says that, while far from vanished, traditional craft skills have become endangered by the arrival of modern commercial allure. "Many masters today, age 40 and older, learned their traditional crafts at a time when simple metal blades and implements were the sole modern refinement upon their ancestors' methods of handiwork. But as Samoa inexorably becomes a money economy, interest in and time to devote to these traditional craft skills have all but disappeared in a single gen-

eration. The tufuga (craftsmen) are respected but sparsely emulated."

In designing an apprenticeship program Enright realized that within his local landscape of widely-dispersed villages headed and administered by chiefs, the awarding of special apprenticeship grants *could* lead to intervillage antagonisms. Within the villages themselves, each extended family would claim its own accomplished craftspeople, so the selection of particular master artists could well lead to perceived insults to entire families. In a society that has traditionally encouraged and valued group activity, the one-on-one learning situation of a European-style apprenticeship is not only an obvious anomaly, it's frequently regarded as just plain weird. And finally, in terms of a local economy that is only partially dependent on currency, the interjection of money into the cultural equation could be ultimately destructive.

The start-up of the apprenticeship program confirmed Enright's concerns. There was no response to newspaper and radio ads in Samoan announcing the new program. It was decided then that he should speak directly with leaders in the remote and dispersed villages where it became necessary to follow the long and slow process of chiefly deliberation, protocol and oratory. Eventually this approach was abandoned also because it became too politicized, and an even slower process of informal consultation and consensus building emerged. After 12 months of apparent inactivity, a time extension for the pilot grant was requested and eventually approved. A letter from Enright at the time referred to the project as "lurching forward" with the situation discouraging and often enervating.

Finally four pilot apprenticeships were begun, with two of the apprenticeships focused on pandanus mat weaving, another one focused on woodcarving and the last one focusing on traditional house building. Mas-

ter carpenter Togiva Vai'au worked with several apprentices at different times in the construction of a *fale tele*, a traditional round house, at the International Airport at Pago Pago. Using traditional adzes, the apprentice team decoratively incised structural timbers and painstakingly bound the structure with 130 miles of hand-braided coconut fiber. In 1991 Hurricane Ofa struck American Samoa, destroying many island buildings including the modern hangars and warehouses of the Pago Pago airport. The traditional *fale* was the only airport building to survive unscathed.

So too the Samoan apprenticeship program has weathered the ever-shifting cultural winds of this Pacific island, largely due to the investment of a lot of time and the development of a cultural sensitivity through lengthy discussions and consultations. Preparations are currently underway for a third round of apprenticeship grants. In an optimistic moment as he struggles with his budding program, John Enright writes, "I always take refuge in the people . . . For them I'm not a program, just a person."

Newcomers and Old Settlers

In Samoa, like Washington, D.C., we can see the impact of the apprenticeship idea upon a long-established and resident cultural population. But apprenticeships are also capable of addressing some of the needs of traditional artists who are recent arrivals in this country. For recent immigrants, geographic dislocation is often no less severe than the cultural disorientation that occurs in a new country where there is a primary need to negotiate an unfamiliar terrain of values. Choices are quickly made about what to retain, what to discard and what to pass along to future generations. Though most cultures resonate through intensive face-to-face transmissions of artistic knowledge, immigrant artists are often confronted

with a situation that pits cultural preservation against the survival of health and home.

The Missouri Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program, funded through the Missouri Arts Council, has supported a series of apprenticeships involving Mone Saenphimmachak, a Lowland Lao embroiderer and weaver. She and her family moved to St. Louis in 1984 from refugee camps in Thailand, having fled to Thailand to escape the political troubles in Laos. Mone was born in Mahazai, a village of 500 families in central Laos, and she began to learn weaving and embroidery at her mother's side at the age of 12. Mone says of these skills: "No one wants to marry a girl who can't sew . . . Even very wealthy girls who would never have to sew as adults had to know some kind of handwork in order to be considered marriageable." While she was courting Vanxay, her husband-to-be, his mother was inspecting her weaving. As part of the process of betrothal, Mone had to present Vanxay's mother with a sarong she had made.

Lest one think that these marriage pre-conditions were a bit one-sided, Mone's father was concerned that his future son-in-law did not know how to build a loom. After their marriage Mone's father instructed Vanxay in the making of a loom, commenting, "Why did you get married if you don't even know how to make a loom?"

Since moving to St. Louis, Mone has taught in the apprenticeship program for four of the past five years, instructing seven apprentices on looms Vanxay has constructed for her. This past year Vanxay taught a young man, the husband of one of Mone's apprentices, the art of building a traditional Lao loom, further echoing a cycle of tradition initiated in a far-away village in Laos.

Weaving and traditional embroidery seem to be part and parcel of Mone Saenphimmachak's sense of

herself and her bittersweet past. She told an interviewer, "When I teach sewing I feel homesick because the patterns I make on the material remind me of the time when my mother taught me." It is important to keep weaving, she says, so "we may recognize ourselves by these patterns."

These woven and sewn patterns, a repertoire of visual melodies, can only be passed on to a student by means of a long and intimate process of demonstration and instruction. Lao motifs are not graphed or charted; they emerge on the loom from the weaver's internalized storehouse of designs. A site visitor to Mone's apprenticeship notes: "In some ways, learning each pattern is much like a fiddler working out a new tune—it is a taxing memorization process that also requires physical dexterity and precision."

In some ways Art Galbraith, a fiddler from southwest Missouri, might seem the cultural antithesis of Mone Saenphimmachak. Six generations of Galbraiths have lived in the Ozark region. Andrew Galbraith, Art's great-grandfather born in 1796 and a veteran of the War of 1812, moved from Tennessee to the banks of Missouri's James River in 1841. A dancing master and fiddler of Scottish ancestry, Andrew Galbraith passed his tunes through generations of children and grandchildren until many landed in the custody of Art Galbraith, who recently died at the age of 83. Art, who knew hundreds of tunes, bemoaned the fact that when some fiddlers play for dances they tend to repeat the same tune all night. He said that after twenty-five repeats "even a top-notch tune can begin to wear on you."

When he selected Justin Bertoldie, a fourteen-year-old fiddler, Art wanted to be sure that in addition to learning technique, Justin acquired a repertoire of these time-tested tunes and an appreciation for "the history and heritage of those tunes." He also wanted to be cer-

tain that Justin be conversant with the full range of tune types—hoedowns, waltzes, jigs, reels, rags, blues and hornpipes.

One tune especially important to Art was "The Flowers of Edinburgh," an old melody that came from his great-grandfather Andrew. He worked especially hard with Justin on this tune, because the Galbraith version is unlike that performed by any other fiddler. Galbraith's persistence was justly rewarded. At a National Council on the Arts meeting held in St. Louis in 1988, Art and Justin performed "The Flowers of Edinburgh" to demonstrate the value of the apprenticeship program. After they had played the complex tune several times in union, Art gradually lightened his touch until he sat with his fiddle in his lap, knowingly smiling at the realization that neither the audience nor the young apprentice was aware that the mentor had stopped playing.

Learning About Learning

In contrast to other activities in which endless definitions and explanations are required, the aims and conditions of an apprenticeship program are everywhere easily understandable and acceptable. The other striking characteristic of an apprenticeship program is that it can fit in just about any place, serving the needs and interests of all kinds of groups—large and small, urban and rural, stable and mobile, religious, occupational and ethnic. A few other general observations have become evident as well during the program's almost 16 years of testing and experimentation:

- The powerful human desire to extend one's own time on earth is often expressed by a longing to share one's knowledge with juniors so that they can carry it forward. Young people long for, but do not always receive, opportunities to earn adult attention and approval. These contradictory but positive impulses are the basic

energizers of any apprenticeship program and should never be overlooked.

- Every apprenticeship program and every apprenticeship within it needs to be individually carved out of a baseline set of principles that are sufficiently flexible to allow for cultural differences and sufficiently rigid to encourage the production of art, which must represent, further and enhance the values of the particular culture in question. (Contrary to popular opinion, folk art is rarely widely accessible and even more rarely is it simple or easy.)

- Genuine apprenticeships are a bit like genuine marriages: tricky to arrange and even trickier to keep going. Individual creative impulses must be negotiated at all stages of the procedure, and a great deal of work devolves upon the “marriage counsellor,” better known as the arts administrator, who keeps trying to bring hopeful couples together and acts as both referee and consultant should any difficulties occur.

- It is therefore unwise to initiate an apprenticeship program without having available both cultural expertise and an energetic support staff. This is a program that requires hands-on administration; there is no use putting it in place without a clear understanding that extraordinary efforts may be necessary to implement it. On the other hand, extraordinary art may result, and that is not an everyday happening.

- Finally, apprenticeship programs seem to succeed when they draw heavily on values and traditions embodied in and reflective of very particular cultural landscapes. As with forests and friendships, deeply-rooted individual apprenticeships tend to stand the test of time. This mysterious process succeeds when there is a timely convergence of aptitude and attitude, grounded in a sympathetic cultural terrain. Like so many good ideas, the concept of apprenticeships came to us unannounced

from the past, a lesson of many masters from many places. And like good apprentices, the NEA Folk Arts Program and its state arts agency partners honor this time-tested concept through imitation. ■

Bess Lomax Hawes directed the Folk Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts until her retirement in 1992. Prior to this, she was assistant director for the Smithsonian Institution's Festival for American Folklife, and for more than 20 years she taught folklore, ethnomusicology and folk music in various California universities. She is also a published author, and has directed several short documentary films.

Barry Bergey is the founder of the Missouri Friends of the Folk Arts and served as co-director of the Frontier Folklife Festival in St. Louis. In his former capacity as the Missouri State Folk Arts Coordinator, he initiated the Missouri Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program. He is currently the assistant director of the Folk Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts.



Culture and Science Join to Save Maine Indian Basketry



The hands of Jane Zumbrunnen, Micmac basketmaker, weaving brown ash splints to make a fancy basket. With the assistance of the Maine Arts Commission, basketmakers from Maine's four Indian tribes have come together to work on the problems facing brown ash basketry.

Photo by Cedric Chatterley

by Wayne Curtis

A chill wind blows in from the west on a squally mid-November day in northern Maine, overturning roadside signs touting “Russets” and “New Potatoes.” The terrain offers little to obstruct the wind; the broad, open sweep of the land is in sharp contrast to the state’s image of rocky coast and forests thick with spruce. In Aroostook County, a sprawling region more northerly than Montreal, the landscape is dominated by dark potato fields. The predominant image is of an endless, overarching sky.

On this blustery day a group of twenty basketmakers, representing two of the state’s four Indian tribes, gathers in a small room on the windswept campus of the University of Maine at Presque Isle for the first of a series of basketmakers’ forums. The basketmakers have come together under the auspices of the Maine Arts Commission to enjoy heaping bowls of moose stew; to view a new photographic exhibit of basketmaking, “Basket Trees/Basket Makers;” and—for the first time ever—to openly discuss the problems they face in keeping their craft alive.

After the stew and a bit of banter about the photos (several forum participants appear prominently in them), the meeting is called to order. Donald Sanipass, a former president of the Aroostook Micmac Council and one of the state’s most respected basketmakers, starts to give a brief demonstration of the basketmaker’s art. He holds aloft a four-foot section of brown ash, about five inches in diameter and split lengthwise. “You’ll notice there isn’t much white in here,” Sanipass says, indicating the grain, the heart of which is lightly streaked with brown as if stained with coffee. “A healthy tree has a lot of white,” he says. “When it’s dark inside, it’s brittle.” And brittle wood is about as much use to a basketmaker as hardened clay is to a potter.

Sanipass doesn’t get much further in his dem-

onstration. His comments trigger a flurry of responses from the other basketmakers, many of whom report similar difficulties finding suitable wood for their craft. “The problem is finding a good splint,” says Yvonne Nadeau, another Micmac basketmaker. “That’s our bread and butter,” says another, clearly worried.

Eldon Hanning, a Micmac basketmaker from Aroostook County, notes that the quality of the more valuable white annual growth rings has been in decline for at least a decade, and that dark and brittle wood is now the norm. But, he goes on to note, a bit of boastfulness creeping into his tone, prized trees haven’t disappeared entirely. He tells of recently harvesting a 24-inch diameter ash that was nearly all white inside. A quiet, wistful murmuring fills the room as the basketmakers recall the days when such trees were common. This is perhaps the most eloquent testimony during the day of the precarious state of the brown ash and the future of Indian basketry in Maine.

❖ Baskets Fancy and Practical

Brown ash splint basketry has been a long-standing tradition among Native Americans in Maine and the Canadian Maritimes. The art has been passed down from generation to generation in all four Indian tribes of Maine—the Micmacs, the Penobscots, the Maliseets and the Passamaquoddies. Several of the tribes’ creation legends center on the brown ash tree where the legendary hero Gluskabe shot an arrow into a brown ash tree and out sprang the Indian people. When recounting this story, Penobscot Tribal Governor Jerry Pardilla adds, “Our roots [like the ash tree roots] are deeply in the land.”

The baskets take a variety of forms, from fancy to functional. Following contact with Europeans, basketmakers often created with trade in mind, designing baskets for settlers in need of containers for harvest and

storage. In the later nineteenth century, the Victorian penchant for embellishment found its way to the ash baskets, and “fancy baskets” with dyed splints and intricate twists came on the market. But by far, the most commonly produced were more prosaic, such as the traditional pack baskets used by tribal hunters and woodsmen, and potato baskets with handles sturdy enough to serve as a makeshift field stool.

Basket styles may vary widely between the tribes. Some of this variation is due to the fact that traditional access to certain materials is limited. For instance basketmakers near the coast, such as those who are Penobscot or Passamaquoddy, have greater access to sweet-grass, a shoreline grass used for decorative trim.

Style of ash preparation may also vary.

Micmac basketmakers start out with a quarter section of ash log, much like that displayed by Sanipass, to prepare it for pounding, which splits the wood into long, pliant strips (or splints) along its growth rings. With a mallet or the blunt end of an axe, they pound the one- or two-inch planks repeatedly to release the splints from the log section. Penobscot, Passamaquoddy and Maliseet basketmakers score the log in one- to two-inch segments and pound the entire log intact. These basketmakers claim that although more time and effort is involved, less waste is incurred as the splints are pulled from the log.

The next step for all basketmakers is splitting the ash splints lengthwise into various thicknesses, some paper thin for certain fancy baskets. This technique is accomplished by using a splitting machine, a handmade wooden, inverted V-shaped device. The machine is placed between the knees and the splint is pulled up through a slit in the top. Varying the tension between the knees allows the strips to be evenly separated. Next, the splints are scraped with a knife to thin them and remove rough outer edges. In general, wider, thicker splints

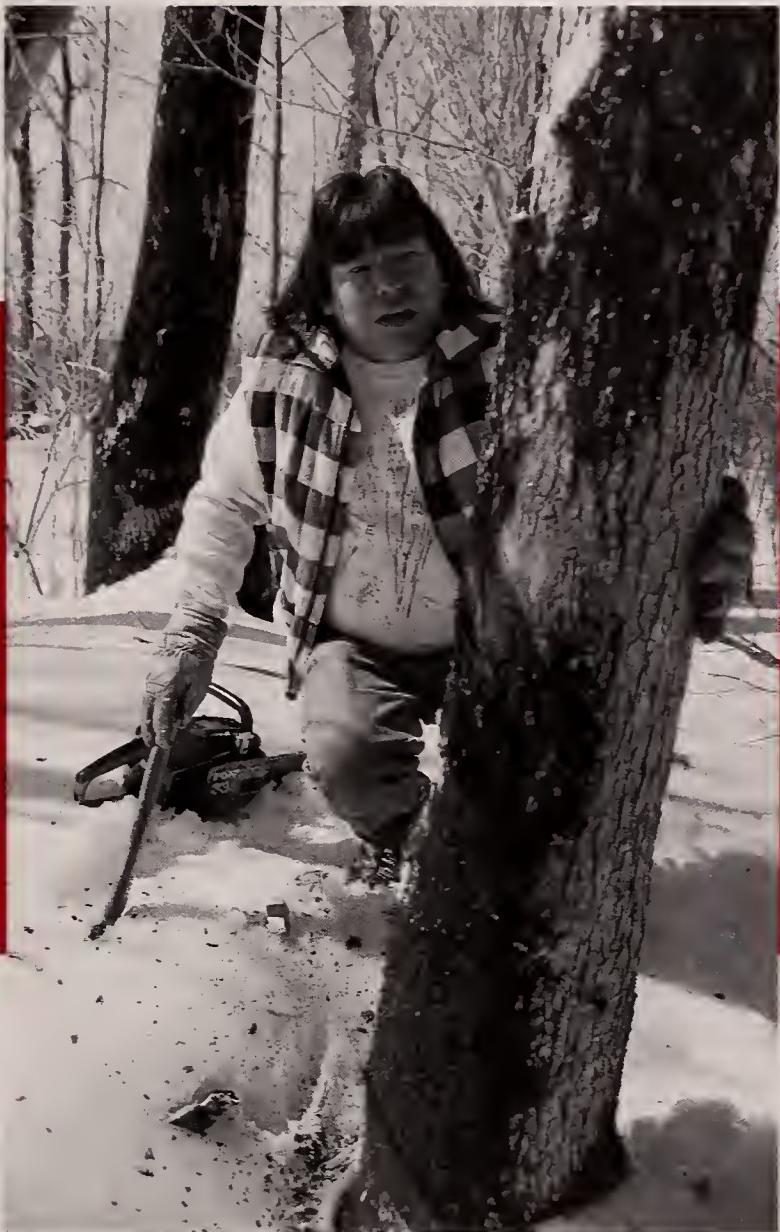
are used in work baskets and narrower, thinner splints are used in fancy baskets. At this point, some basketmakers may dye the ash to add colors.

❖ The Brown Ash

The tree that makes this all possible is the brown ash (in scientific circles it's called black ash, *Fraxinus nigra*). The brown ash isn't a particularly notable tree. Slender and rarely exceeding 50 feet in height, the brown ash prefers marshes and stream beds where it can absorb prodigious amounts of water. This saturated condition makes the wood only marginally useful for most purposes, including firewood, but highly valuable among basketmakers for its extraordinary pliancy. Other woods including the maple, cedar and other ashes may be riven into splints, but Maine's basketmakers say that brown ash has no rival.

In the eyes of basketmakers, not all brown ashes are created equal. Ashes found on higher ground or near stands of cedar tend to be naturally brittle and of little use. “You have to know the ash from the outside in,” says Lawrence “Billy” Shay of the Penobscot tribe. Many of the basketmakers say that the art of basketry begins well before the first splint is cut, in being able to identify a suitable tree in the forest.

By way of example, Marge Pelletier, a Micmac basketmaker from Fort Kent, says she asked the land manager for a local paper company if he had any brown ash culled from his stands that she might use. He did, and he arranged for a truckload to be delivered to her house. After it was dumped in her yard she discovered it was all knotty and dying. She asked Donald Sanipass to poke through the pile for usable logs, but there was nothing. “It was the worst wood I'd ever seen in my life,” Sanipass says with a chuckle.



❖ Micmac basketmaker Richard Silliboy inspecting a brown ash tree to see if it is healthy and thus usable for basketry.
Photo by Cedric Chatterley

❖ Finding Good Ash

But as the shared comments at the first forum suggest, even those well versed in selecting good ash trees are finding it harder these days. Sanipass, who has been making ash baskets for 35 years, says that even ash in the swampy areas is becoming brittle, which all agree is an unsettling trend. "I've walked into many areas and I think, 'Oh boy! I've struck a gold mine,'" he says. "But then not one tree is any good."

Sanipass says that the brittleness sets in when a tree starts to die. And this mortality is afflicting younger and younger trees. A decade or two ago he could regularly turn up large and healthy trees, like the one Eldon recently found, but these days similarly fine specimens are rare. Even trees of just four or five inches in diameter show signs of early decline, such as splitting and peeling bark and limbs slowly dying some 20 or 30 feet above the ground. "A few limbs will tell you the whole story," he says.

"Someone has to look at why they're dying," Sanipass says. "Right now we can just guess at it. I suspect that pesticides or acid rain have something to do with it. Something's the matter with the water."

❖ The Sweetgrass Model

The declining health of the brown ash first came to the attention of the Maine Arts Commission (MAC) in 1991 when Kathleen Mundell, a traditional arts associate, found that basketmakers throughout the state were finding widespread shortages of ash. Even with funding from the MAC Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program, basketmakers could not track down adequate ash splints. "Several basketmakers said, 'This is great to try and work on the passing on of the skills, but there's another problem here as well,'" Mundell recalls.

Mundell prepared two grant proposals for the National Endowment for the Arts Folk Arts Program to address the problem. The first was for an exhibit that would help focus and draw attention to the brown ash basketry and the concerns of the makers. The second was to fund a series of meetings to allow the basketmakers to gather and discuss the issue both among themselves and with natural resource professionals. Both proposals were funded.

In casting around for possible avenues down which to proceed, Mundell found an earlier precedent where a traditional art form had been threatened by a declining resource. As it turned out, in the late 1980s African American basketmakers in the low country of South Carolina had faced a similar challenge.

In that case, the supplies of sweetgrass used in traditional basketry were slowly dwindling, mostly due to sunbelt development. Housing subdivisions, malls and commercial expansion were reducing access to the reedy grasses used in making coiled baskets, an art form that had been carried to American shores from Africa during the slave trade. Dale Rosengarten, a historian who served as guest curator of the McKissick Museum's Low Country Basket Project, reported then that she heard the same refrain from every basketmaker: "The supply of sweetgrass is shrinking fast. We need help finding more."

To address this problem, a sweetgrass conference was convened in Charleston, South Carolina, to bring together concerned individuals, including basketmakers, folklorists, scientists and public officials. Concerns were aired and a number of initiatives proposed. These initiatives included the creation of a new community organization to negotiate grass-harvesting rights on privately owned islands, the involvement of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in expanding propagation of the grass and a coastal inventory of existing sweetgrass stands.

❖ Building a Bridge

Wanting to learn from the experience of others, the Maine Arts Commission sought the advice of Rosengarten and basketmakers across the country, including the California Indian Basketweavers Association. Rosengarten spent several days in Maine last year meeting with basketmakers, and concurred with the arts commission that a similar statewide conference would be beneficial in sharing concerns and exploring possible solutions. Because Maine basketmakers were more widely scattered and less cohesive than their South Carolina counterparts, the arts commission planned smaller gatherings prior to the statewide conference in order to identify a commonality of purpose.

The arts commission set about building a bridge between itself and the basketmaking community by hiring Theresa Hoffman as coordinator of the project. A talented young Penobscot basketmaker and a natural resources professional employed by the Penobscot Nation, Hoffman was familiar with concerns about resource management as well as the needs of the basketmaking community. She also brought a well-grounded sense of the challenges the project would face. “It’s very hard to organize basketmakers,” she says, pointing to the geographic distances in northern Maine, the advanced age of many basketmakers and their fierce independence.

Once the bridge was in place with Hoffman as coordinator, the next step was to get the basketmakers talking among themselves about the problems. The photographic exhibit, which was initially designed simply to be an educational display, took on a more dynamic role. The traveling exhibit, entitled “Basket Trees/Basket Makers,” documented the craft through a series of photographic portraits depicting the basketmakers at work.

The displays—which were mounted in unassuming ash frames—were accompanied with explanatory

text and quotes from the basketmakers themselves. A 16-page booklet with color photographs was also produced and incorporated photos and text from the exhibit. “Basket Trees/Basket Makers,” which was first displayed at the University of Maine library at Presque Isle, gradually became a focal point for bringing together the 20 basketmakers, many of whom were meeting for the first time.

Traditional moose stew, served up from a bubbling crock pot, provided an extra incentive to attend this first forum, particularly among the older basketmakers. But the greatest incentive turned out to be the opportunity to exchange information and express pent-up concerns and grievances. By providing this outlet, Mundell was also able to gauge whether the basketmakers truly were interested in working together to resolve their greatest challenges. Without that resolve, Mundell reasoned, a conference would serve little purpose.

❖ Educating the Consumer

While the health of the ash was a central topic of discussion, it was by no means the only one. The subject of economic incentive—a common theme in the traditional arts—came up frequently, rivaling the decline of the ash as a subject of interest. Several program participants noted that the prices for baskets had risen considerably in recent decades, but more gains were needed to ensure ash basketry’s future.

Madeline Shay, a 77-year-old Penobscot basketmaker, noted that she had been making baskets since she was a young girl. “When I first made them, they went for fifty cents apiece,” she recalls. “And even then they said that was too much.” Today, Shay sells her “fancy baskets” for as much as \$85. But others pointed out that this is the wholesale price paid by a museum gift shop, which then doubles the price before they reach collectors. Several suggested that the makers should keep the

mark-up rather than the museum. By the close of this first forum the basketmakers agreed to work together as a group to pursue these common issues and so formed the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance.

Participants in this first forum at the University of Maine also embraced the notion of expanding public education efforts. Serious collectors know well the value of the baskets and often remark at the reasonable prices Maine's basketmakers charge, especially compared to dealers in the larger cities. But the market remains limited to these select few. More typical are the casual shoppers who come across the baskets in a shop and loudly comment that baskets are much cheaper at Pier One Imports, a national retail chain. "People have to know that this is a form of art, not just baskets by the dozen," says Theresa Hoffman.

Several ideas about education were put forth, among them developing a video showing the painstaking and detailed craftsmanship involved in producing an ash basket. Shopkeepers could run this for their customers, and teachers for their students. More detailed brochures and hang-tags on the products themselves were also discussed. Gary Stanton shared his successful experience with the South Carolina sweetgrass basketmakers. There, the state helped underwrite a detailed brochure about sweetgrass basketry to be distributed through shops and state tourism offices, boosting interest and sales. "The American public is hungry for things that have roots, and they're willing to pay for them," Stanton says. "But they have to know about them."

Forum participants hope that through education the market will expand and the economic incentive to learn basketry will increase, making basketry competitive with other jobs in the eyes of younger tribal members. Today's basket prices, while healthier than in the past, need further gains to ensure that the next genera-

tion will carry on the art. Through a grant from the Office of Public Partnership at the National Endowment for the Arts, the Maine Arts Commission, in conjunction with the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance and the Maine Office of Tourism, is investigating hiring a marketing consultant who will work with the alliance in developing a marketing strategy. Such a strategy would promote Maine Indian basketry outside the region and result in better prices for the work.

And many agree that's imperative if brown ash basketry is to survive. "At least a generation has already been dropped," Theresa Hoffman says, noting that her great-grandmother was a basketmaker but not her mother or her grandmother. "This is almost gone. It's our last chance."

Through cooperation and better remuneration, the image of basketry within the tribes themselves may also begin a needed rehabilitation. For many, particularly among the older Indians, making baskets has been viewed distastefully as a means of basic survival, not as an art form. "I sold baskets when I was young, with my parents, and we'd go from house to house," recalls Marge Pelletier. "You'd bring in these baskets and nobody wanted them. You almost had to give them away. We sold them for five cents."

Pelletier's parents discouraged her from pursuing basketry because of its association with poverty. They told her to go to school and not to worry about baskets or she'd be poor all her life. "Now that I've gone to school and I've done my thing, I think: Look at what I've missed all this time," she says. "It's such a fine art."

Culture and Science Meet

As this chapter was being written, a second forum took place on the Passamaquoddy reservation, followed by a statewide conference. The conference, sponsored by the

Maine Arts Commission, the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance and the University of Maine's forestry department, brought together basketmakers, tribal leaders from the four main tribes, as well as folklorists and state foresters to address two broad concerns: the declining health and availability of the brown ash tree and the need to improve marketing of brown ash baskets to a wider public.

A discussion about the trees themselves revealed that a survey on the health of the brown ash trees conducted by the Maine Forest Service corroborated anecdotal evidence from basketmakers in the four tribes who have known for the last 15 or 20 years that there are problems with the brown ash trees. Although there has been documentation that the brown ash trees have declined since the 1930s in the Northeast, no research has been done in northern Maine on these and other hardwood trees. According to the survey, the crown condition of most existing brown ash trees was "moribund." The majority of the trees displayed crowns that were more than 60 percent dead. Several theories about the deterioration of the brown ash tree were mentioned, including drought, disease caused by microorganisms and insects, groundwater pollution resulting from overuse of agricultural chemicals, indiscriminate harvesting by foresters and airborne pollutants, such as acid rain.

The conference featured a presentation by the Brown Ash Task Force, a group of foresters, basketmakers and community members created in 1990 to address the concerns of the four tribes about the availability of quality brown ash trees for baskets. What is unique about the group is that it represents a blend of traditional cultural values with a scientific approach. The task force noted that tribal uses of natural resources have both cultural and religious significance, which lends a different perspective to the problem. The task force suggested a

three-stage process for addressing the problem: 1. Identify and describe existing stands of brown ash with a goal to develop a preservation plan for them. 2. Research and develop with the University of Maine forestry department test plots of brown ash trees to develop hybrids. 3. Create ten-acre plantations on each of the four reservations to grow hybrid brown ash.

❖ A Fabulous Start

Mundell admits that she didn't know what to expect at the first forum. As it turned out, the two forums and the conference reflected an urgent need for communication, both within and outside the basketmaking community. Preserve the resource. Educate the public. Instill a renewed sense of pride. Forum participants agreed that these are foundations on which the brown ash project must build. And channels of communication are already becoming established outside of the usual channels.

The final chapter has yet to be written. Whether the decline of the ash can be reversed and the markets for ash baskets improved remains to be seen. But the direction is true and the progress so far has been swift. And optimism prevails. Before leaving the first forum and heading out the door into November's early winter, NEA observer Gary Stanton saw only encouragement: "I think they're off to a fabulous start." ■

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Strengthening Organizations to Fulfill Community Needs



Alexa Canady signs autographs following her speech at the Columbus Museum of Art. Dr. Canady's appearance was in conjunction with the exhibition "I Dream a World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America."

Photo by Eric Shinn

by John Rufus Caleb

The Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio, has never regretted its decision to change its image. The African American Arts Alliance has grown from one woman's dream to a regional organization in Pennsylvania. And the Asociación de Músicos Latino-Americanos is keeping the music alive in Philadelphia. In rural Indiana, Perry County citizens answered the call for a town meeting and are now busy celebrating the arts through their new local arts council.

The directions these arts organizations have taken have been encouraged and supported by their respective state arts agencies. In each situation an agency program created to increase the diversity of artists, arts presenters and audiences made a significant contribution to community life.

The three programs profiled in this chapter exemplify ways state arts agencies support cultural diversity: by strengthening the artistic and managerial abilities of multicultural organizations, helping mainstream organizations connect with the cultural communities around them and providing audiences with greater access to artists and arts events in their communities. These programs share the common philosophy of helping participants to help themselves. By providing organizations with the means to strengthen and develop, state arts agencies are helping to ensure the continuation of artistic and cultural traditions.

Ohio

Reaching Out in Columbus

A record 21,000 visitors attended the 1992 summer exhibit "I Dream A World: Portraits Of Black Women Who Changed America," at the Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio, and the overwhelming majority of the visitors were African American. As perceptions of the Columbus Museum of Art were changing in the

community, "I Dream A World" with its attendant programming was having a profound influence on the museum internally. The exhibit had opened a door.

According to Columbus Museum of Art Assistant Director Denny Griffith, "Factors both outside and inside the museum converged to make the exhibit possible. From the outside, there was funding from the Ohio Arts Council's Building Diverse Audiences Program, while on the inside, Columbus Museum of Art Director Merribell Parsons had just arrived with outreach experience from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Without the two, neither 'I Dream A World' nor the smaller events surrounding the exhibit would have occurred."

Building Diverse Audiences

Through the Building Diverse Audiences Program, the Ohio Arts Council (OAC) provides substantial funding (up to \$25,000 per year) for institutions with a serious commitment to making their programming more accessible to minorities and special constituents. The program's four-year process involves one year for planning and two to three years for implementation, or a year of planning for another targeted audience. As a result of a 1987 survey of major institutions, the OAC found that many institutions wanted to reach out to new audiences, but did not have the money, staff or time to mount an outreach campaign. In this scenario the Columbus Museum was no different from other major Ohio institutions, except perhaps in the depth of its commitment to open the museum's doors.

The museum applied for a one-year planning grant and plunged into its outreach initiative in January of 1989. Griffith met with Phyllis Hairston, Building Diverse Audiences coordinator of the Ohio Arts Council, to explain the goals and objectives of the museum, in ad-

dition to its plans for achieving them. "We had to convince the museum that attracting people of color was more complex than marketing via traditional means. We're not talking about people who are in tune to visiting art museums. This target audience had not been made to feel welcome in the past. They are not going to just receive a flier in the mail and decide to go. Better marketing tools were word-of-mouth recommendations and individual ticket sales." The OAC staff further suggested that the museum convene an advisory committee of African American artists, educators, civic leaders and other professionals, who knew the channels for reaching their community.

The individuals who consented to join the Minority Outreach Committee were all sympathetic to the museum's goals. As Griffith was aware, not everyone in the minority community was prepared to endorse the museum's three-year effort. The Columbus Museum was the result of generations of patron families, all of European descent. Neither the museum's patrons nor its staff had been exposed to African American art, and they had experienced little interaction with the African American community—only a stone's throw from the museum.

The initial meetings of the Minority Outreach Committee were frank, even confrontational, but fortunately not antagonistic. The museum discovered that it was perceived as both a resource to the community, and yet still a club for the wealthy. The museum was told pointedly that to be successful in its outreach it would have to plan *with* the African American community, not *for* the African American community. As the meetings progressed, the museum had to come to terms with how it truly felt about opening its doors. How comfortable would it feel with this new audience? Griffith and his colleagues spent much of that winter reflecting on how narrow the institution's focus had always been.

Catherine Willis was one of the initial members of the advisory committee. A retired city school teacher, Willis brought a decade of experience as a presenter of arts programs within the African American community. She had long felt the museum was not 'open' to the entire community. "We all support the museum with tax money," she repeatedly instructed the board and the staff. "In return, people of color need to have a sense of 'ownership' of the museum." The comment was effective.

By August of 1989, the committee was able to identify the two major barriers to museum participation by African Americans: the lack of African Americans on both staff and board, and the small number of African American-related artworks in the collection, which created the general perception of the museum as an all-white institution.

Soon after, the museum's board adopted an institutional policy and position statement describing its outreach aspirations: "We believe that the future of the Columbus Museum of Art is tied to its relationship to a community and society that is plural and culturally diverse in nature. Therefore, it is our belief and stated goal to seek a level of inclusiveness at all institutional levels that adequately and accurately reflects the diversity and plurality of the world in which we live."

As a vehicle for implementing board policy, a standing African American Cultural Committee was formed. By year's end, the Cultural Committee introduced the museum's staff and volunteers to African American art and artists with two slide/lecture presentations. Unique African American films, like *Losing Ground* by feminist filmmaker Kathy Collins, and a video festival were co-sponsored by the museum and the National Black Programming Consortium, based in Columbus. Ohio State University's Black Studies Depart-

ment became a resource for material and expertise on African American art and culture. By the second year of the Building Diverse Audiences Program, the Columbus Museum of Art began to exhibit African American artists from the community in major solo exhibits featuring local artists Aminah Robinson and William Hawkins. The traveling exhibition "Wild Spirits/Strong Medicine: African Art And The Wilderness," organized by the Center for African Art, was also mounted, and collaborations with other organizations deepened.

The curatorial staff surveyed its holdings of African American art and came back both shamed and delighted: the museum had more African American art than they had realized. Evidently the Columbus Museum of Art had a history of going to the studios of Columbus-based African American artists and purchasing their work. What remained was to catalogue the works and then mount them. For Griffith the outreach effort was becoming like destiny: the museum was truly fulfilling its mission as an educational institution.

Catherine Willis could see the museum was changing and so accepted membership to the board. "The success of the outreach effort was going to depend ultimately on a board that's been sensitized to multicultural concerns and issues. I could see that something was beginning to happen with the board, but I wasn't certain they were ready to extend themselves completely . . . People don't jump from one set of values and attitudes overnight. Change comes slowly, and only through education, exposure and interaction."

"I Dream A World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America," a major exhibit, was recommended by both the African American Cultural Committee and the museum staff. The touring exhibit of 75 large portrait photographs by Brian Lanker was a roll call of artists and activists who overcame racism, pov-

erty and sexism through their strength and conviction. With the exhibit's related activities, the entire museum would be involved with African American subjects and issues. Columbus would see and experience how far their museum had come.

For everyone, the large turnout for "I Dream A World" was the gratification and justification for their work. For seven weeks the museum sponsored almost daily activities: receptions and book signings were held for some of the women photographed; documentaries on Fannie Lou Hamer and Marian Anderson were shown and discussed. Children were also involved through activities designed for them, including exhibit-inspired workshops on photography and "Celebrating Family Legacies." The exhibit drew beyond the artists and patrons that earlier shows had attracted, as teachers and their students attended. The advertising concentrated on African American social and religious groups had paid off. Groups were booked two weeks in advance. And as staff and board interacted with African American fraternities, sororities, churches and community leaders, the museum's world changed. A whole other culture, as vibrant as the one that spawned the museum, became a full reality.

The museum has now passed through the four-year cycle of the Building Diverse Audiences Program, but the outreach effort continues. Fifteen new members have been added to reinvigorate the African American Cultural Committee. A new exhibit, "People, Places And Things: An African American Perspective," opened in April 1992 and features twenty-four artists whose lives and careers have been interconnected with Columbus. The artworks were drawn principally from the museum's permanent collection.

In 1989 the Columbus Museum of Art, as an institution, looked into the mirror and set about chang-

ing the image it faced. The few who began the process became the many who struggle to continue the museum's transformation. A visible African American presence in the museum is now integral to the museum—part of its fabric, consciousness and destiny.

Pennsylvania

❖ One Woman's Dream

Maya Angelou was electrifying in 1982 when she spoke at Keystone Junior College near Scranton, Pennsylvania. The strength of her presence and her insights into being a woman and African American, delivered in the distinctive roll and rhythm of her voice, were astounding to experience. When Angelou left the campus she left a void in the life of Ada Belton, the Keystone English professor who had invited Angelou to speak. Still, Belton went about her business: chairing the college's cultural affairs committee, serving on organization boards and teaching African American culture from books.

Nine years later, Belton began to dream of Angelou's anniversary return. Except that by 1991 Angelou's expected honorarium was \$10,000—four times the amount paid in 1982, and one too large for Keystone's cultural affairs budget. Area colleges and organizations were interested, but they were having their own economic difficulties. Even a grant for that amount from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA) or a foundation seemed impossible.

The situation had to be rethought. If not Angelou, who or what would be the centerpiece of the Black History Month celebration? If an event were outside the college's usual cultural programming, who would funding come from? Who would provide the support services? And without a committee, who would even help Belton plan?

By the time Belton telephoned PCA and

spoke with Charon Battles, minority arts program director, she had a goal. "I wanted a program of events, not just funding for a single speaker. I was determined to fill the eleven months surrounding February with symposia and performances of African American art and culture. I also wanted to create an African American archive as a community resource." And, she wanted a host of other projects to fill the void she felt was due to the lack of emphasis on African American culture in Scranton.

❖ Strategies For Success

Ada Belton was a perfect match for the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts' Strategies For Success program. The program identifies the ethnic arts groups in the state and assists them in both their organizational development and their efforts to preserve and interpret their cultural heritage. Program strategies include long-term consultancies, individual development workshops and conferences. However, as Belton had not yet formed an organization, she would enter the program on the Basic Level, which was established for groups seeking assistance to develop a formal board structure, more consistent arts programming and nonprofit status.

When her phone call to the council ended, Belton was sorting through her mind for prospective board members. Meanwhile at the council, Charon Battles, the program director of Strategies For Success, was estimating the driving time to Scranton from Harrisburg. "As I worked with Ada, her ideas began to mature and to encompass a community vision. Her growth was an exciting and gratifying process to observe. I stress observe, because Strategies For Success tries to empower organizations by allowing them to develop their own ideas and the means to implement them," says Battles.

Through Battles, PCA established a relationship with Belton's developing organization, which came



❖ Through the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Strategies for Success program, the Asociación de Músicos Latino-Americanos (AMLA) has been able to expand and grow strong in response to the demands of its community. Among AMLA's many activities, students are offered music instruction for a nominal fee.

Photo courtesy of Asociación de Músicos Latino-Americanos

to be called the African American Arts Alliance. Strategies steered the new organization to possible grants in PCA programs and helped draft grant requests.

After a year in the program, the African American Arts Alliance created its mission statement, wrote bylaws and formed a board drawn from the African American community and three area colleges (Keystone, Marywood College and the University of Scranton). Development of the board represented the transformation of Belton's personal mission into a community-wide effort. "Strategies For Success has been instrumental in the formation of the African American Arts Alliance as a whole—getting the right people, the right constituencies, onto the board. In the process, we expanded from the three colleges into the community. We're now a *community* organization."

The alliance's 1992 Black History Month celebration, "Succeeding Despite The Struggle: From the Perspective of African American Writers" was the first of a series of conferences that will appraise and celebrate the contemporary African American arts and cultural experience. The conference brought together national and local writers in a panel discussion. In 1993 the conference focused on the performing arts, highlighted by a performance of the musical *Our Young Black Men Are Dying, And Nobody Seems To Care*, and a lecture by African American film historian Donald Bogle.

While Maya Angelou may not return to Scranton for some time, when she does she will have been called by a community invigorated by the work of this new coalition.

❖ **Keeping the Music Alive in Philadelphia**
¡*Qué triste sería un pueblo sin música!* Indeed, how sad would be a people without music. Especially when the people must survive the battering that urban living ad-

ministers to those who are poor and different—to be *sin música* is to be in despair. Latino American musicians living in Philadelphia know this, and more. Their music is the heartbeat of their community. With Latin American music transplanted to America and in competition with empty commercial tunes, the only way to guarantee its preservation is to make sure there are people to play the music and others to listen and understand.

A decade ago thirteen salsa band leaders in Philadelphia came together as the Asociación de Músicos Latino-Americanos (AMLA) to promote the development and dissemination of Latin music. They would become musician-teachers and ambassadors for the music.

Today AMLA encompasses Philadelphia's School of Latin Music; a performance series of local, national and international musicians; a musician and band referral service; an Artist in Education program; and is the publisher of *Pulso Latino*, a Latin arts publication and calendar.

AMLA is about to leave the Intermediate Level of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts' Strategies For Success program and move to the Advanced Level where it will focus on fund-raising, long-range planning and board development. In the Intermediate Level, Strategies helped AMLA remain stable despite the organizational pressures brought on by its rapid growth, rising visibility and the increased demands of the community.

Jesse Bermudez, president of AMLA, had good reason to join Strategies in 1990. The organization seemed to be growing arms, and it was becoming hard for Bermudez to manage it alone. AMLA musicians had reached a combined audience of 40,000 in 1989, and were providing 170 students with nearly 800 hours of music instruction at nominal cost. The quarterly newsletter had 10,000 subscribers. The need for assistance became imperative when AMLA moved into its own office

space, and found that funding for ongoing administrative support was still elusive.

The Intermediate Level of Strategies For Success gave AMLA what it needed: the means to free Bermudez to concentrate on program development. Using technical assistance grants, AMLA hired additional office staff and a part-time bookkeeper, who later became comptroller. The arts council's two-day workshops on organizational development, in addition to the advice given by the PCA staff on basic office management, proved to be as important as the council's funding.

Through Strategies, AMLA hired a consultant to expand the organization's funding base beyond the arts council. One immediate result has been funding support from the Rockefeller Foundation to commission and premiere six new works by mid-career Latino composers from around the United States. Collaborations with organizations like the New York Shakespeare Festival and Young Audiences of New Jersey have spread word of the music and given artists both exposure and new income. "AMLA's mission is to guarantee that the rich heritage of the Latin musical traditions is learned, played, understood and enjoyed. To make that possible we have to chase the dollar. At times we had to change program ideas to fit a funding proposal. But Strategies asks, 'What are your needs right now? How can we help to make it possible for you to move to another level?'," says Bermudez.

Despite its growing national profile, AMLA remains firmly planted in the Latino community, as it must. Latinos form one of the most underserved communities in Philadelphia—in housing, health care and education. More Latino children drop out of school than stay in. While the Asociación de Músicos Latino-Americanos cannot meet all of these varied and complex needs, the band of musicians does what it can.

Indiana

A New Local Arts Council

Prior to 1990, the citizens of Perry County had only vaguely heard of the Indiana Arts Commission (IAC). Perry County was one of a dozen areas in Indiana that had not submitted a single grant application to the IAC in the previous five years. The IAC staff knew that zero applications did not mean zero cultural activities. It did, however, mean that public arts support was not reaching all of Indiana's citizens.

Fortunately at a Tell City town meeting in August 1990, Perry County artists and arts patrons were introduced to the Indiana Arts Commission through a special program called Arts: Rural and Multicultural (ARM). The town meeting is a key element of the ARM program. During the meeting, the community residents surveyed the county by assessing its arts needs and identifying potential arts programs, spaces and presenters. A broad cross-section of the county's citizens was present and eager, including artists eligible for grants and business persons amenable to supporting the arts. Under the guidance of IAC Executive Director Tom Schorgl and Assistant Director Greg Charleston, the group discussed the facilities available to house or present the arts, existing arts programs, potential human resources and possibilities for financial support.

The Perry County citizens decided they needed an arts council. When they adjourned late that night, the Perry County Arts Council had a steering committee that was charged with creating a board, drafting bylaws and developing programs. Perry County was moving faster than the Indiana Arts Commission expected. The next step would be to provide the emerging group with both technical assistance to help it develop and guidance on grant writing.

Arts: Rural and Multicultural

The ARM program represents the IAC's long-term commitment to support new, emerging and community-based organizations and artists by helping to make their activities accessible to new, expanded and underserved audiences. The IAC initially chose 12 pilot sites; 10 of which were rural, because the rural counties had not applied for, or received, state funding in at least five years. The remaining two pilot sites were culturally diverse, with the state's largest African American and Hispanic American populations, and were drastically underserved.

Perry County, one of the 10 rural sites, displays the diversity of both the ARM program and the state of Indiana and serves as a model for the program. The efforts of the Perry County Arts Council (PCAC) and the community exemplify the goals and opportunities available to all ARM program participants. According to Regina Smith, ARM program manager, "Arts organizations, *per se*, don't exist in most of our counties, which is why Perry County is such a model. It's amazing that an emerging arts organization, over a three-year period, has been able to develop bylaws, a schedule of programs, a newsletter and even begun to market itself outside the county. When it comes to the programs that we've worked with so far, PCAC is unique and by itself at one end of the spectrum."

One Tell City artist, Pat Jarboe, was not at the town meeting, but he happened to read about it in the newspaper. Jarboe had left a good California job in technical theater to return home to Perry County. He could raise a family in Perry County, but his theater skills were beginning to atrophy. He was eager to be a part of anything arts-related. "In 1982 a group of us tried to begin an arts council, but the thing failed miserably. We didn't know what we were doing. This time we're succeeding, because ARM has been with us from the begin-

ning. They've funded consultants and technical seminars, like the one we just had for board development. We're now ready to enter the next phase where we apply for large operating and programming grants, rather than a grant for each project."

Within months of joining the Perry County Arts Council steering committee, Jarboe was elected president. Jarboe had ambitions for the young council, but without even a tax-exempt number, the committee had to work slowly. Their first project was arranging the annual Tell City Madrigal Dinner. The effort involved applying for an ARM grant, coordinating more than sixty people and seeking the support of a dozen county organizations. The volunteers pitched in to prepare the food and rehearse the concert. The performance was sold out within a week. It was clear to the PCAC that people were willing to support arts programs. To the members of the steering committee and the residents of Perry County, an arts council began to make sense.

Following their first success, the PCAC elected board members and developed bylaws and a calendar of activities for the year. The Perry County Arts Council began offering assistance to other arts presenters. Through successful grant applications, tax dollars began to return to the county and local businesses ceased to be the sole source of funding for events. The spring 1992 Dogwood Festival allowed the council to mount its own project, an art show and craft sale. Soon after when Tell City honored its local historian, the PCAC sponsored a competition to choose a painter for the portrait.

After these early successes the arts council was primed for a big project, and chose to have a mural painted on the Tell City flood wall. The total project cost over three years would be \$30,000, and though the Indiana Arts Commission offered some grant assistance, the county arts council supported the bulk of the project.

The possible benefits of the Flood Wall Mural went beyond the aesthetic, as it would contribute to saving the flood wall from graffiti and reclaiming the park adjacent to it for family use. In May 1992, a local design artist outlined the first three of seven panels: re-creations of historic buildings in the city. Through the summer a second local artist oversaw the volunteers who painted. The activity of the volunteers attracted the curiosity of their neighbors, who wanted to know if the new council was still accepting volunteer painters.

Even as the arts council collects small donations from VFW and American Legion auxiliaries to advance the Flood Wall Mural, the PCAC is planning ambitious future projects to fill the numerous areas of need in the county. The county schools have no arts programming. The many church choirs, musicians and music theater groups need to be brought together in a salute to local talent. Fledgling painters need art classes. And the local chamber of commerce must be encouraged to apply to the IAC for support when it sponsors the upcoming riverboat orchestra concert. Ultimately the PCAC must convince the county's nonprofit arts groups that their programs can compete with those of other arts organizations in the state and that they should apply for support.

The Perry County Arts Council is becoming credible after a two-and-a-half years of effort. With no real past experience in organizing, the council is learning as it goes along. And the principal engine for its efforts has been the Arts: Rural And Multicultural program.

Through the Arts: Rural and Multicultural program the Indiana Arts Commission will increase its programs and services to 25 targeted areas in 1993. The commission also proposes to increase the maximum funding available, place greater emphasis on technical assistance, and through the ARM Forum provide opportunities for rural and multicultural presenters, artists and

schools to share information and participate in problem-solving sessions.

A Commitment to Encourage And Support

The vibrancy of American culture is formed from an astounding variety of ethnic and geographic cultures. Subtract even one and America loses its diversity and vitality. Responding to this issue is a dilemma that confronts many facets of American society.

Clearly the response of the state arts agencies in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Indiana has been to encourage and support diversity. Their staffs have gone out into the overlooked farms, barrios and urban communities to form working and mentoring relationships that help dedicated organizations fulfill their missions to their communities. The programs for these outreach efforts are models for other state arts agencies, not solely for how to include and fund multicultural organizations, but also for how to cultivate and strengthen all arts organizations. ■

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The Age-Old Ritual of Storytelling



Seeking to increase access to the arts in underserved communities, the North Carolina Arts Council created a project to bring two innovative theater groups to the rural, northeastern section of the state. Students here vie to participate in a Roadside story at the C.S. Brown Cultural Center in Winton, North Carolina.

Photo by Cedric Chatterley

by Nayo Barbara Malcolm Watkins

doubt there's a community in America, or in the world for that matter, where given just the right company, the right time of day or night and an appropriate amount of nudging, commentary couldn't turn rather quickly into full-fledged storytelling. People have stories—their own, other people's and those of super beings and critters—and they tell them. They tell them to preserve history, legend and lore; to teach values; to reaffirm who they are; to find humor in life and living; to put children to sleep; to make mockery of adversaries; or simply to compete for attention. When people have little else, they have their stories.

Rural Southern Stories

Storytelling in the rural South is special. It's a part of the ritual of defining and aligning people, place, culture and claim. Perhaps the specialness is related to the fact that more than enough rural Southerners have known more than enough times when there seemed to be little more than the stories. During those patient times a yarn could get worked back and forth between tellers 'til it's honed to a tee.

Today, people in the rural South aren't inclined to think much of the traditions of storytelling that they've inherited. Storytelling is something the old folks do, and it seems that they do it less and less. But separate projects that brought Junebug Productions of New Orleans and Roadside Theater of Whitesburg, Kentucky, to rural communities in North Carolina and Mississippi may have made a difference in the way people in those places think about and honor their own and their neighbors' stories. These projects have also provided a way for arts agencies, funders and organizers to explore new methods of engaging new audiences and underserved populations.

Roadside and Junebug are professional theater

companies from very different southern communities. Roadside's home is the Appalachian coalfield region of eastern Kentucky and southwest Virginia where populations are predominantly white. Junebug is a product of the black community in the Deep South and the Free Southern Theater, an artistic offspring of the Civil Rights Movement. Both companies draw upon the storytelling and music traditions of their communities as the basis of theatrical creation and production. Both also use their art as weaponry against prejudice and stereotypes, and to encourage awareness of cultural differences.

Junebug/Jack

In the early 1980s, John O'Neal and Dudley Cocke, the artistic directors of the two companies, observed the rise of Ku Klux Klan activity in the country and discussed the impact of touring each other's communities.

From those discussions and a decade of collaboration has come *Junebug/Jack*, a coproduced theater piece based on the stories and music of poor whites and blacks in the South. Junebug is an African American folk character invented 30 years ago by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to represent the collective wisdom of black people. Jack is the hero of the Appalachian "Jack tales" (including their most famous ancestor, "Jack and the Beanstalk").

The play makes the point that the stories of people whom history has set apart are really rather similar, and in fact may have been traded back and forth and added to along the way. In a review published by the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, Richard Dodds, a theater critic, echoed this sentiment when he said the play "demonstrates a sensitivity to black-white differences while also highlighting some of those areas where traditions, legends, experiences, interests and even music overlap." He went on to comment: "Our roots have all become

tangled together, the piece is saying, and there is more to be gained in nurturing these cross-pollinated heritages than in antagonistically yanking them apart."

The theme is set forth in the early moments of *Junebug/Jack*. "See, everybody has a story, their own story, but it seems like it's come to the place where people don't think their stories are worth anything anymore," one actor begins. "Trouble is," says another, "seems like some people are always wanting to tell our story for us." A third adds, "But, we got to tell it ourselves! Otherwise how we gonna know it's us?" And finally, "If we don't listen to the stories of others, how will we know who they are?"

❖ Community-Based Art

O'Neal's and Cocke's early 1980s discussions are now part of a national dialogue with other touring artists, presenters and funders. New ways of thinking, which may be old ways revived, have emerged about artists working in more meaningful ways in communities. Among the new ideas is that community-based residencies de-emphasize the staged performance as *the* event and place greater emphasis on participation and interaction in shared processes. The role of the artist goes beyond performing to assisting people in discovering, honoring and sharing their creative resources and their potential for creative community-building.

"It's like forming a circle with the community people," says Dudley Cocke of Roadside Theater, "putting out, receiving and putting back out. If the circle is broken, somebody is cut off from the full experience, and this happens when the artist hogs the event." Storytelling works especially well because teller and listener are active partners in an event of the moment. Of the staged performances, Cocke says, "Audiences often talk back and talking back is not impolite."

North Carolina

❖ In the Field and On the Front Line

In 1988 the North Carolina Arts Council (NCAC) held a series of meetings in preparation for developing a state-wide plan for the 1990s. As they listened to the concerns of the arts community, the council heard anew the challenge of supporting the arts in rural, culturally isolated and economically depressed communities. "What we heard and what struck us were the real barriers to rural accessibility," says NCAC Assistant Director Nancy Trovillion. "With so few resources, the matching dollars just weren't there, and often there wasn't an organization to do the work." The four-year plan that evolved from this study of the field carried a strong commitment to access for underserved populations and community cultural planning. An initiative of the plan eventually brought Roadside and Junebug to communities in northeastern North Carolina.

The 16-county area lying south of Virginia's Hampton Roads to the Pamlico Sound and west of the Atlantic Ocean splashing the Outer Banks to Lake Gaston is the state's most economically depressed region. Waterways and wetlands have historically shaped the economic, social and cultural patterns that provide opportunities, as well as limitations and isolation. Preservation efforts draw inspiration from an illustrious history of explorers, colonists and pirates beginning in the 1600s. The names of about half the region's towns and counties are reminders of the heritage of Native American tribes still living there today. The northeast is also home to the state's largest concentration of African Americans, reference to still another historical presence. In recent years the separate histories of Native American, white and black communities, along with the more recent presence of small Asian and Hispanic communities, have been dominated by economic and social concerns. The stories



Audience members joining Meherrins in a tribal dance at the Gallery Theater in Ahoskie, North Carolina.

Photo by Cedric Chatterley

of these communities reflect the common themes of survival and coexistence.

NCAC staff realized that many northeast communities would not be able to take advantage of the council's new initiatives. Arts councils exist in only 9 of the 16 counties and most are volunteer-run. The distribution of state arts funds to the northeast region have been well below the state average. The decision was made to initiate a project with goals for cultural exchange and celebration of local culture in the hope that such a model would inspire broader cultural planning. Says Trovillion, "In the early days of the council the staff was more involved in developmental work. Then, as organizations developed on their own, we took a more responsive and less activist role. The northeastern project put us back in the field and on the front line."

With this project NCAC had three goals. According to Trovillion, "One was to use cultural exchange—between segments of communities and between communities and guest artists—to celebrate local cultural life and build bridges of understanding between cultures. Another was to help northeastern communities become more reliant on their own cultural gifts as sources of pleasure and enrichment. And another was to figure out what combination of people and money would be needed to keep public cultural activities going in the region."

NCAC staff first presented the idea of a regional residency project to the Northeastern Cultural Alliance, an organization struggling to serve as a regional network in the state. Alliance members viewed videotapes of Roadside's and Junebug's work, discussed how the project might aid long-range planning and agreed to become the sponsoring body. A project coordinator from the area was hired and the region was divided into hubs of three or four counties. In the hubs, committees com-

piled community surveys and assessments to assist with local residency planning. There were lots of meetings—in the hubs, with the project coordinator, with NCAC staff and with members of Roadside and Junebug. NCAC supported the project with the assistance of a grant from the State and Regional Program of the National Endowment for the Arts.

❖ **Permission to Be Ourselves**

Finally it was time for Roadside and Junebug to do what they do best. The residency began with an eight-day pre-tour designed to demonstrate how community-based residencies might work. On the first night, in the tiny town of Moyock in Currituck County, the comely bunch of six actors in blue jeans, gingham skirts and fancy boots met with local folks at the elementary school. They performed *Junebug/Jack* stories and shared a lively evening with local exhibitors and performers. There was a dollhouse maker, taxidermist, woodworker, photographer, quilter, pianist, gymnast and clogger. There were traditional musicians who played well into the night.

In each hub local artists were invited to meet and perform with the "outside professionals." Each site was different. In Hertford, meeting at the sight of the oldest house in the state, the artists shared the stage with local theater artists who performed a reader's theater of older stories written by a North Carolina playwright. On the stage of the Gallery Theater in Ahoskie, they were joined by Meherrin tribal dancers, gospel singers and cloggers. The C.S. Brown Cultural Center, site of a historic African American school, was the setting for an intergenerational session that went from story swapping to ham bone slapping to singing "Amazing Grace." In Roanoke Rapids, where Haliwa Saponi dancers performed with the visiting artists, discussions about social and economic conditions led to talk about collecting oral

histories and community stories as the basis for creating a play. By the end of the pre-tour, people were getting the idea that it wasn't about being entertained by outside professionals, but about people sharing and exchanging. Said one woman, "The way they were, they gave us permission to be ourselves."

❖ Drawing Stories from the Well of Living

On the second and longer visit the artists spent time in schools, many of which have been consolidated by busing students from opposite ends of a county. At the Hertford County High School, a three-day workshop focused on connections between formal studies, traditional lore and awareness of one's own history and that of others. The song "Get On Board Children" served as introduction for discussions on slavery and the underground railroad. The banjo, slide guitar and harmonica helped trace the historical paths and cultural mergers of different Americans. The stories of John, an African American trickster character, and Jack, an Appalachian folk hero, helped point to parallels between the everyman stories of different cultures and similar characters in classroom literature. The students were asked to think of how oral traditions pass from generation to generation and to recall stories they'd heard in their communities. One quiet young man told of his western North Carolina Cherokee roots and how he and his father tell the stories of their history through the music they play together.

There was also more time for story and music swaps, meals and casual talk. With NCAC staff the artists joined a gospel group for a Thursday evening rehearsal. Around a home piano in Winton they sang round after round of church and civil rights songs. At a Meherrin tribal center the artists and participants watched a man applying beads and feathers to his regalia, talked about concerns of the times and shared stories.

The Meherrin Chief closed the evening with a personal story about a rattlesnake as a way to talk about honoring difference and coexistence.

Personal stories were central in informal sessions throughout the region, particularly where seniors were present. There was the story of the car that would never go to a funeral; boyhood memories of hiding eggs in an outhouse and playing in a sawmill; stories of volunteer fire fighters, moonshine and ice-covered rivers; and hard-times tales about making a living. At some sites local crafts were showcased—wool spinning, wood carvings, musical instruments, quilts, afghans—and often these too represented stories to be told.

The Roadside and Junebug artists told stories too, and talked with people about the rich reservoir of living from which stories can be drawn and the value of passing them on. Some people wanted to know more about collecting oral histories and scripting the stories into plays.

❖ Staged Performances

Each residency culminated in a community performance with local artists, community members and children sharing the stage with Junebug and Roadside. These were held in schools and centers, like the one at the Lakeland Arts Center for the people in Northampton and Halifax Counties. Haliwa Saponi dancers and drummers performed an opening ceremony, followed by a gospel quartet, a young man reading a story he'd written, a skit improvised by three students, a Langston Hughes reading, and stories and songs by Junebug and Roadside.

Finally, people from all over the region were invited to a full performance of *Junebug/Jack* at Elizabeth City State University, the region's only four-year institution. The University Choir, with rich voices and robed attire, set the tone for the evening with classical

and gospel selections. The songs and stories of *Junebug/Jack* come from people, like those gathered, who reach deep into their memory and experience. The results are spirited songs, humorous stories, allegories and ironies and hard stories all too familiar: about farming; about the ones who migrated north, those who watched them go, and the ones who went and met the disillusionments of urban life. There was a story about a white boy and a black boy meeting in a foreign land fighting for their country and how they grooved with Muddy Waters and each other, only to return after the war and “It never was the same after that.”

The end of the residency project was for exploring the possibilities raised and what these possibilities could mean in this northeast section of North Carolina. I listened to people describe the residency with terms like *participatory, openness, bonding* and *magic*. At a meeting of the Northeastern Cultural Alliance participants talked of wanting to maintain the broad interest and participation that had been created. The dilemmas of the northeast have not gone away, but the people now have new ways of making art, and through the art an aid for making community.

Mississippi

❖ The American Festival Project

The Mississippi American Festival Project was quite similar to the North Carolina project—the format, the sharing, people coming together and telling their stories. The Mississippi project, however, was initiated by the American Festival Project (AFP), based at Appalshop in Kentucky. The American Festival Project is a coalition of theater, dance and music companies from different parts of the country and of different cultures. Funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Ford, Nathan Cummings and Rockefeller Foundations has allowed AFP

to subsidize a series of community-based residencies around the country.

Caron Atlas, executive director of the AFP national project says, “The project can serve as a creative catalyst in communities. But it can’t have impact in a vacuum; the artists work in support of both the goals and visions of the presenters and the needs of their communities.” A goal of the Mississippi American Festival Project was to help small and rural organizations improve their skills in presenting and fund-raising, skills that are crucial to developing access. “We’ve learned that access means first listening and not assuming you know,” says Jane Hiatt, Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC) executive director. In addition to developing detailed residency planning, they raised part of the funds.

The Mississippi presenters included a child and family services organization, a community center, a cultural arts center, a community theater with a cultural museum, two small private colleges and a rural-based state university. I had the great pleasure of serving as state coordinator for this loosely-knit network. As we visited the events of other American Festival Projects, “Stories into Art” emerged as the theme around which each group was organizing its local activities. The presenters invited six American Festival companies; some invited more than one company and built their year of programming around them. Roadside Theater and Junebug Productions were invited by both Brickfire Project of Starkville, Mississippi, and Mississippi Cultural Crossroads of Port Gibson, Mississippi.

Brickfire and Crossroads were able to tap a grants program that matches MAC funds with Southern Arts Federation funding. Hiatt says, “We’re finding ways to break the boxes that have been barriers to funding many projects, and ways to encourage projects like the ones in Port Gibson and Starkville.” With technical assis-



❖ Through the collaboration of state arts agencies, funders and presenters, many people in North Carolina and Mississippi were able to watch and participate in the unique experiences surrounding presentations of *Junebug/Jack*.

Photo by Cedric Chatterley

tance from the Mississippi American Festival Project, the presenters also singly and collectively applied to new funding sources. Grants were secured from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the Ruth Mott Fund, the Mississippi Humanities Council and Alternate ROOTS.

❖ Bringing Communities Together

Brickfire Project gets its name from the red bricks of housing projects that are home to many of the children in its child development centers and from its goal to nurture the “burning desires” of those and other low-income children. In addition to a range of family services, Brickfire is an active arts presenter in “the Golden Triangle,” which includes the rural loamy-hill counties of Oktibbeha, Chotaw and Winston. Starkville is best described as Mississippi State University and a small town. As in many university towns there is the division of “gown and town,” which translates into an elite, mostly white community and a poor, mostly black community.

Brickfire decided to use a performance of *Junebug/Jack* to bring the two communities together. Of the small, biracial audience that came on the first night and grew on the second, Leslie Leech, Brickfire’s cultural coordinator commented, “We did better than any town meeting could have in bringing people together. The dialogue onstage was a catalyst, a point of interest, for dialogue offstage.” The visiting artists’ presence in the community was central to the plan. They held workshops with university students, visited public school classrooms, swapped stories with senior citizens and later told these stories to children in day care centers. It was important that all these people could feel comfortable in the place where the play was performed. The cross-cultural appeal of the play, coupled with the use of a building in common territory, helped spark dialogue within the commu-

nity. Months later when Liz Lerman & the Dance Exchange, an intergenerational, biracial American Festival company, came, Brickfire tried their plan again and expanded it to target a larger senior audience.

❖ Hearing Local Stories for the First Time

Port Gibson is in Claiborne County, north on the Mississippi River from Natchez and New Orleans. Once a busy slave trading center, today the county is 82 percent African American. The high school averages 99 to 100 percent African American, and 95 percent of public school students qualify for the federal free-lunch program. On the side of town where antebellum mansions mingle with comfortable modern homes is a private school that is 99 to 100 percent white.

In this context Mississippi Cultural Crossroads (MCC) offers a space and programs for local people to come together to create, preserve and share a sense of community and, as MCC Director Patty Crosby is quick to point out, “a sense of who they are.” This sense of community is reflected in the award-winning works that adults, seniors and youth produce and display in the storefront MCC art center on Main Street. It’s also reflected in the noisy rehearsal chatter of Peanut Butter & Jelly, a youth theater program that has succeeded in bringing together students from the public and private schools. While most of MCC’s constituency is African American, attraction to the theater spread in 1989 when Cornerstone Theater of New York City visited and produced an integrated “Romeo and Juliet,” which made the cover of *American Theater Magazine*.

Imagining that an inclusive community theater might be possible, MCC planned the Junebug/Roadside residency around sessions for writing, telling and performing stories. The artists worked in classrooms during the day and at the center in the evenings. On the

evening of the story swap, professional and professed storytellers, black and white, young and not so young gathered in a big circle. Infectious as storytelling is, even those who claimed not to know a story were inspired to share at least one tale. Local people heard local stories they had not heard before. One man who had never been known for talking much, "broke loose" with some of the most amazing, well-crafted and funny stories of the evening. The ritual was repeated during the later residency of Carpetbag Theater, based in Knoxville, Tennessee, another American Festival company with a storytelling repertoire. "In fact," says Crosby, as she continues to promote the possibility of a community theater, "by popular demand, story swaps are becoming a regular happening in Port Gibson these days."

❖ A Creative Cycle

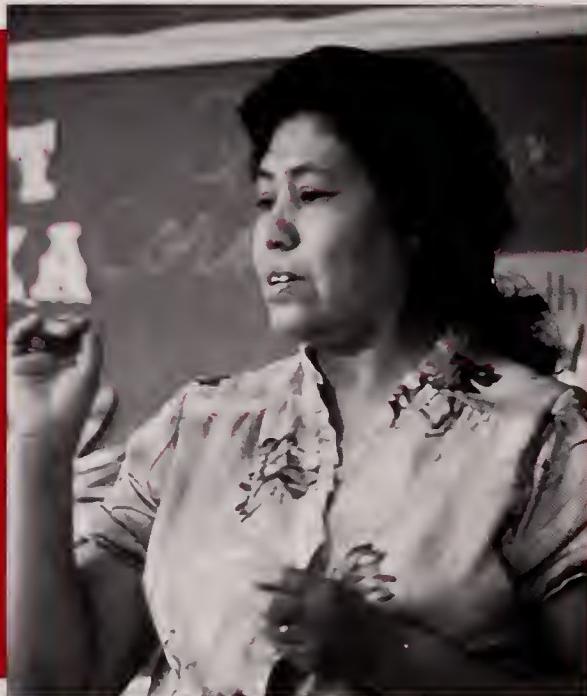
Meanwhile back home, Junebug and Roadside build upon these and other touring experiences in projects in their own communities. What they learn they take back on the road and the cycle of experience continues. "It's about process over product," says Junebug's John O'Neal. "It has to be seen as a lens for examining process. And ultimately, it's about empowering people by affirming their own strengths."

So once upon a time some storytellers passed through, and they helped revitalize, revalidate, connect and reconnect age-old rituals . . . and things happened in rural North Carolina and Mississippi. The prospect of community theaters developed, new arts participants appeared, lots of new plays were created and all kinds of people started telling and listening to each other's stories. ■

Nayo Barbara Malcolm Watkins is an independent arts consultant who works with state arts agencies and nonprofit arts organizations in North Carolina and the South on organization and program development. She has served as executive director of a dance ensemble, a theater troupe and an arts organization, and is a published playwright.



Building Bridges in Education Through Folk Arts



Corona-maker Eva Castellanoz teaches students how to make the delicate crowns of paper flowers that hold special significance in Mexican culture. Through the Idaho Commission on the Arts Community Cultures program, Eva and other artisans were able to share their artistry and culture with school children.

Photo courtesy of Eva Castellanoz

by Julie Fanselow

The United States is a nation of widely contrasting cultures, but few states could be as geographically and historically different as Idaho and Rhode Island.

Idaho is one of the last vestiges of the true American West, its vast inland landscape marked by towering mountains, scenic rivers and windswept plains of molten lava rock and sagebrush. The state has more roadless area than any other in the continental United States, and many of its towns didn't exist 100 years ago.

Rhode Island, by contrast, was settled more than three centuries ago as a haven from religious persecution. The state's character reflects its New England heritage and its coastal location. Although small in size, Rhode Island is one of the nation's most densely settled states, with about 960 people per square mile (compared to about 12 people per square mile in Idaho).

Despite these differences, Idaho and Rhode Island have characteristics in common. Each is among the nation's smallest states in terms of overall population, which means that state and local agencies lack national political and economic clout and must often do for themselves. Each state is home to myriad people from varied ethnic backgrounds. And each has found a way to mine its human resources to create truly innovative approaches to folk arts education.

Idaho

Getting Parents Involved

Idaho is a state of immigrants. Except for the state's Native Americans, few Idahoans have roots going back more than a century. Many of the state's Mexican-American people are among the most recent arrivals still struggling to find acceptance and purpose in their new communities.

Many Mexican-Americans live in Nampa, a

town of about 28,000 located in southwest Idaho's "Treasure Valley" near Boise. Of 8,100 students attending the schools in the Nampa School District, eight percent are classified as migrant students. Some of these migrant children's families have settled into year-round life in Nampa, but others must travel from town to town as they follow the crops and work the fields. The Nampa School District's Community Cultures Program grew out of teachers' and administrators' desires to help migrant parents participate in their children's education. They decided to do this by integrating folk arts lessons into the fourth-grade social studies curriculum, which emphasizes Idaho's history and its diverse population. "We want parents to become more involved in the schooling of children . . . so they can see that the schools belong to them," says Raphael Ortiz, one of several fourth-grade teachers at Nampa's Lakeview Elementary School. Lakeview became the program's pilot school because of the faculty's willingness to take on the task.

Community Cultures Program

In pursuing this idea, the Lakeview teachers began by contacting the Idaho Commission on the Arts (ICA) and asking if a school/community folk arts fair might qualify for assistance. Anna Marie Boles, then arts in education director for the ICA, told the teachers the fair didn't meet the commission's guidelines but that educational artists' residencies could qualify. Boles then told the teachers about ideas for a Folk Arts in the Schools program that the commission was considering developing.

Everyone who took part in the resulting Community Cultures Program emphasized the importance of teamwork in making it start strongly and run smoothly. At Lakeview Elementary, the Community Cultures team included teachers, the school principal, district administrators, parents and other interested

members of the community, all of whom worked with staff people from the ICA. Twilo Scofield, an Oregon folklorist and teacher, served as project consultant. In addition to support from the ICA, the Idaho State Department of Education and its Migrant Education Program, the program was funded in part by a NEA Arts in Education grant to the Idaho Commission on the Arts.

The Community Cultures team started by seeking out traditional artists from a variety of backgrounds. They found people like Filemon Ballesteros, a Mexican-American agricultural crew leader who also weaves intricate, macrame-style bags, and Eva Castellanoz, a woman widely recognized for her skill in creating Mexican *coronas* (crowns made of waxed paper flowers). And although the program started with a Mexican-American focus, coordinators quickly learned about talented artists from many other ethnic groups, including a Shoshone-Paiute bead artisan from the nearby Duck Valley Indian Reservation, a Vietnamese couple who create traditional lanterns and a Pakistani storyteller. Most of these people are themselves parents or grandparents of school-age children and have a lifetime of informal teaching experience.

In the meantime, the fourth-grade teachers at Lakeview Elementary School prepared their students with lessons from Scofield's booklet *Out On a Limb*. The booklet helps children trace their own family trees, ask questions about their cultural heritage and bring evidence of that background into the classroom through a kind of international "show-and-tell." One boy whose family hailed from the southwest Pacific islands of Tonga taught his class how to dance the *hula*. A girl whose background is Laotian offered a 20-minute program showcasing, among other things, a tape of her brothers' traditional Laotian musical group and her mother's native dress.

❖ Enthusiasm in the Classroom

The teachers also took time to tell the students about the artists' home countries before the visitors arrived, providing a solid context for the classroom appearances. By the time the presenters arrived, the children were bursting with questions. "I was struck by the preparation the teachers had done with the students," Boles says. "They knew the questions to ask, and they didn't have to be prompted." When Loc and Huyen Kim Nguyen, the Vietnamese couple, demonstrated how to make traditional lanterns used in an annual Children's Day parade, the students asked so many questions that the actual lantern-making had to wait until after lunch.

Eva Castellanoz, who lives just over the Idaho border in Nyssa, Oregon, makes *coronas* in part to keep alive the ideals behind the delicate crowns made of paper flowers, which traditionally are worn by Mexican girls on special occasions. It used to be that only virgins could don the *corona* on their wedding day, she says, but with the increase in teen sexual activity the flowers no longer hold the same meaning in Mexican culture.

With a classroom of fourth-graders, Castellanoz takes a different tack. The children watch with rapt attention as she shapes paper petals, dips them into hot wax, then molds the flowers. The flowers come in different colors—red, yellow, pink—"just like people," Castellanoz says, "and each one is beautiful in its own way." "We're all unique and the flowers we make are going to be different from everyone else's flowers," she adds. "But they are all going to be beautiful."

Castellanoz's skills are known all over the West, and she is a past recipient of a National Heritage Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. She enjoys visiting classrooms because it gives her a chance to nourish the cultural roots of young Mexican-American children and help keep their heritage alive in a very tan-

gible way. "If we help our children to be proud of who they are and what they know, they'll do well anywhere," she says.

The Lakeview teachers say they noticed definite improvements in their students' levels of self-esteem and cultural awareness following their involvement in the Community Cultures Program. ICA staff member Jil Sevy recalls that young Ricardo Ballesteros was never particularly interested in learning about his father's bag weaving until the day his dad actually showed up in his classroom. "It made him come out of his shell. He was like a different kid," Sevy says. "It was great."

Ricardo Cedillo, former principal of Lakeview Elementary, says parent participation was key to the program's success. "We had a lot of parental involvement, and when you get the parents involved, it makes the kids feel better," he notes. "The kids felt proud of their parents, and I hope they will continue to feel that way."

Asked what advice they would give other groups trying to start a similar program, the Community Cultures organizers had several suggestions.

Robert McCarl, former ICA folk arts director, says state and local departments of education need to make sure their multicultural education efforts are ongoing, integrated programs that make full use of each community's human resources. Only then, he says, will cross-cultural education move away from many schools' practice of offering one week's instruction on a culture "and figuring they've done it."

Everyone involved stressed the need for early organization and cooperation among all parties participating, from administrators and teachers to parents and other community members.

"Be sure of your team," says Howard. "Be sure everybody is well-informed and really wants to do the program."

"To make it work, the teacher involvement has to be there," says Sevy. "It's quite labor intensive. The teachers at Lakeview were very enthusiastic and wanted to see it happen."

Sevy adds that it's important to have the teachers trained by an experienced folklorist. "If you don't have that, you have a fluffy little program without any substance," she says.

"Take the time to plan it and don't try to rush into it," advises Boles. "Figure it will take several years to really get it into place. We just scratched the surface of the potential of what's there, just identifying that everyone carries with them certain perspectives and knowledge."

Rhode Island

Kits Unearth Cultural Treasure

The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA) has also discovered a creative way to present the art and culture of its diverse ethnic groups to the children of Rhode Island. During the mid-1970s, the nation's smallest state became a haven for many Hmong people who had fled the mountains of Laos and Burma in war-torn southeast Asia. "Southeast Asians, including the Hmong, were the most recent immigrant group in the state and the one that people knew the least about," says Winnie Lambrecht, director of the council's Folk Arts Program.

Lambrecht and her assistant, Carolyn Shapiro, thought the best way to introduce Hmong culture might be through a kit that could be loaned out to interested schools. Drawing on descriptions and artifacts from Hmong life overseas and in Rhode Island, the council created a veritable treasure chest for all who would use the kit. Among the items included were beautifully woven floral cloth, photographs, translated copies of Hmong folktales, a small musical instrument similar

to a Jew's harp and cassette tapes of Hmong music and conversation.

RISCA also produced a kit focusing on the basket-making of three cultures represented in the state: the Hmong, the Yankees (or descendants of early New England settlers, mostly from England and Scotland) and the Narragansetts. The kit included finished baskets along with photos of the artists and introductions to basket-making techniques.

RISCA produced these kits in 1985-86 through a general support grant from the NEA Folk Arts Program. Recently, Lambrecht co-produced a third kit focusing on sub-Saharan African cultures for the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Museum, which funded the project through a foundation grant. Lambrecht says each kit costs between \$2,000 and \$4,000 to develop and produce, depending on how much research is needed. The two RISCA kits have remained in continual use since the mid 1980s, and the RISD kit is available on a subscription basis.

"The kits give kids a switchboard they can plug into," says Dan Kahn, RISCA folk arts program assistant. Some children may want to ask questions about a group's history, while others may be more interested in the art forms or language. The kits offer plenty of different stimuli and many avenues of introduction to the culture, Kahn notes. They are used only in conjunction with a classroom visit by a traditional artist, or as the basis for a school exhibition.

Through the kits, RISCA strives to provide enough background so users can gain an understanding of the entire culture, not just the arts. For example, the basket-making kit showed how different factors ultimately disrupted the traditional craft. In the case of the Yankees, change came about through industrialization; for the Hmong, it was geographical dislocation; and for

Native Americans, environmental conditions including paved roads and construction eliminated the natural materials used for the baskets. "The kits go beyond artistic appreciation," Lambrecht says, "they indicate the traditional arts are part of a context."

One teacher who has used the kits is Susan McGreevy-Nichols, who works at Roger Williams Middle School in Providence, a school where the student body is more than 90 percent minority, blending Mexican-American, African-American and Asian cultures in its classrooms. McGreevy-Nichols tries to incorporate her students' varied cultural backgrounds into her classes. The kits offer an easy way to accomplish both objectives, she says. "It's really hands-on, things they can touch," she notes. McGreevy-Nichols also appreciates the wealth of information each self-contained kit offers. "It does a lot of the research that I don't have time to do," she says. "I'd like to see a kit for every culture."

✿ Looking to the Future

Both the Idaho and Rhode Island programs got off to strong starts in the mid-to-late 1980s, fueled by the vision and hard work of their founders. Now, however, each program is struggling. But no one in either state is ready to give up.

RISCA hopes to compile additional kits representing other cultures, including the state's varied Hispanic populations, French-Americans and emigrants from the Cape Verde Islands. But the council's staff has been pared from 13 to 7 people, and there is neither time nor money for new projects. Meanwhile, the kits are still available for loan to schools, and libraries have expressed interest, too.

Idaho's program attracted funding from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as the state arts commission and education department. Activities started

at Lakeview Elementary in 1989 and continued for two school years. Following this pilot period, the state migrant education program expressed an interest in expanding cross-cultural education to other towns throughout the state. Two bilingual videotapes were produced to help other communities understand and implement the Community Cultures Program, and these remain available to interested schools and community groups. But before Community Cultures could be formally expanded to these schools and communities, the program was temporarily put on hold.

Idaho Commission on the Arts Executive Director Margot Knight says ICA's five-year plan calls for expansion of the project into three schools in the next year. Voicing her support for the program and her hopes it will continue, Knight adds, "This program is a great reminder to kids and their parents that art is not something the 'other' people do. Art is in every Idahoan's historical backyard."

In the meantime, Lakeview's teachers are doing their best to keep the program going on their own. Lakeview teacher Ellen Howard, for example, remembers how to make the three-dimensional, star-shaped Vietnamese lanterns and so has passed that skill on to new classes of fourth-graders since the Nguyens' visit.

The two videotapes describing the Community Cultures Program, for which the state migrant education department provided production support, continue to carry the message. One tape provides an overview of the Community Cultures Program; the other focuses on "Senor Ballesteros," the Mexican-American bag weaver. Each tape is available in both English and Spanish.

Warren Taylor, state migrant education director, says the tapes have been shown all over the state and he understands several districts are using the Com-

munity Cultures model to develop programs of their own. "We don't even know the full effect the videotapes have had," Taylor says. But he was present in Nampa's neighboring district, Caldwell, when the videos were shown to a group of local Mexican-American leaders. "By the end, they all had tears in their eyes," he recalls. "And they said, 'If Nampa can do that, Caldwell can too.'"

"I think there's always a pride in what one can produce and create," Taylor adds. "To think that other people would be interested in that and would want to learn it too just makes you feel good. It makes you want to share what you know, and it makes you feel like what you know is worthwhile." ■

Julie Fanselow is an Idaho-based free-lance editor, writer and publicist. She has written about the arts for numerous regional and national publications, and she serves on the board of directors for the Magic Valley Arts Council in Twin Falls, Idaho.



A Celebration of Life Through Words, Music, Song and Dance



With California Generations, presenters and the state arts agency collaborated to present performers from around the world, all of whom now call California home. Chatuye is shown performing the drumming, song and dance of the Garifuna people of Belize.

Photo courtesy of the National Council for the Traditional Arts

by Margarita Nieto and Mark Cianca

They traveled up and down the length and breadth of the Golden State, this eclectic group of singers, dancers, musicians and poets. In each place they enchanted audiences with their dazzling costumes, haunting music and lively songs and dances. This performance tour was California Generations, an extraordinary endeavor that presented a California often overshadowed by the stereotypical glittery, plastic image of life in the land of sun and surf. It presented songs and chants in Karuk and Yurok, the languages of California's Klamath River people; dances celebrating Hmong and Tibetan rituals and myths; ancient Hawaiian chants; and pulsating rhythmic Garifuna music. California Generations was a tribute to cultural traditions in contemporary California and a manifestation of how culture binds families.

The group, which also included a cowboy poet, an Afghani *dutar* master and a group of Mexican *jarocho* musicians originally from the state of Veracruz, also bears witness to California's diverse population. This phenomenon not only reflects the changing demographics across the United States, it is also indicative of the state's unique geographical site. California is truly the last frontier, the jumping-off place that opens up to the world. Its western border consists of 1,000 miles of Pacific coastline, and its ports, San Francisco, Los Angeles-San Pedro and San Diego are important North American gateways to the South Pacific and Asia. To the south, it borders Mexico, to which it once belonged, and *La Línea* is the major port of entry for immigrants coming from Mexico and Central and South America. As a consequence California boasts a spectrum of world cultures living within its borders. There are approximately 240 ethnic, occupational, religious, linguistic and regional groups in California as well as 124 rural tribal reservations and *rancherías* for some 40,000 native Californians. *California Generations* proposed to emphasize the pride

that these immigrants maintain in the cultural traditions they have brought with them into this new land and the continuing strength of centuries-old native values, customs and performance traditions.

❖ How It Came to Be

California Generations was conceived by Mark Cianca, the booking director of California Presenters, and Joe Wilson, director of the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA), in November 1989. The idea was developed in response to the needs of California's diverse presenting community and the unique cultural mix of the state. California Presenters, a booking consortium of the state's presenters whose membership consists of both large, university-based presenters and small, community-based organizations, had never before commissioned new work. The breadth of its members and the distances between them seemed to preclude engaging in a commissioning project that would serve a majority of the members and help move the organization forward.

According to Mark Cianca, "California Generations worked in reverse." The usual method is to commission a new ballet or a new musical piece from an artist, choreographer or composer. "California Presenters asked the NCTA to work with us on the development of a tour, not of a brand new piece of art, but of art that was based in community and passed along through time. We would work with the NCTA to discover a part of California that few among us knew or understood: the folk arts traditions of the state's immigrant and indigenous communities." A program such as this, a global view of California's folk tradition, had never been done before.

California Presenters already had a long-standing relationship with NCTA. California Presenters' members had presented many of the highly successful tours that Joe Wilson had produced in the past, includ-

ing *Raíces Musicales*, which featured the regional musics of Mexico and the Hispanic Southwest, and *Masters of the Folk Violin*. According to Wilson, California was a particularly rich source for this kind of event. “In the last thirty years,” he says, “California has been enriched by a disproportionate number of immigrants, many of them artists, who have chosen to remain there.”

California Presenters provided an organizational backbone for the experiment. The organization not only drew on audiences already developed in a particular community for this kind of event, they also utilized each member as a hub for the performance itself and for activities to be held in conjunction with it. California Presenters also sought the funding for the tour, which was difficult to obtain despite potential funders’ expressions of admiration for the project. Funders were reluctant to support a project that defied the traditional commissioning model. As Cianca describes it, “We were working counter to funding conventions: we asked for the money in advance so we could find the artists we would present in the program.”

❖ An Extraordinary Effort

Fortunately the California Arts Council (CAC) was enthusiastic about California Generations and met the challenge of funding the unusual project. By being creative and flexible, CAC was able to accommodate the project’s financial breadth by distributing it over three programs: California Challenge Program, Multicultural Arts Development Program and Performing Arts Touring and Presenting Program. Since the project was being funded through three programs and therefore could not go through the normal panel review process, council members reviewed and approved the expenditure of funds for California Generations. The arts council also submitted a successful proposal on behalf of the project

to the State and Regional Program of the National Endowment for the Arts. The Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Fund also provided project support.

❖ Selecting the Artists

The major objectives of California Generations included identifying and honoring California’s folk artists and community-based presenters, and cultivating and serving an expanding audience base. A less tangible objective was that by showcasing the state’s cultural diversity everyone involved—audience, performers and organizers—would have the opportunity to see themselves in a new light. There was also hope that this project would give impetus to similar projects nationwide and even worldwide.

But how to select the representative performers for such a tour in the most populous state in the nation? For that, Cianca and Wilson met with the Generations Committee to discuss the development of field work and to identify the cadre of field workers needed to accomplish it. The Generations Committee was composed of arts specialists from the National Council for the Traditional Arts, California Arts Council and California Presenters, including: Joe Wilson and Julia Olin from the NCTA; staff from the California Arts Council, including Philip Horn, then manager of the CAC Performing Arts Touring and Presenting Program, and Barbara Rahm, then coordinator of the CAC Folk Arts Program; and Mark Cianca and others from California Presenters.

The National Council for the Traditional Arts was charged with the task of producing the tour. Joe Wilson contacted a network of community leaders who began identifying different groups and along with those leaders, a field group, consisting of field-workers and consultants, scholars and specialists who served as “eyes” and “ears.”



❖ Chaksam-Pa draws from the folk songs and dances, operas and rituals of Tibet in its performances.

Photo courtesy of the National Council for the Traditional Arts

The results of the fieldwork were presented at a ten-hour meeting of the Generations Committee, during which they viewed videotapes, listened to recordings and discussed the blend and aesthetic mix of the artists they were considering. "We saw cultural treasures, in raw and unedited format, and the toughest part of the project became the culling of a lengthy list into a briefer set of preferences and priorities," says Cianca. They finished the meeting with a "short list" and a directive for Joe Wilson: To talk with each of the artists and ensembles on the list to determine if they were capable and interested in touring for up to three weeks, and to verify their artistic merit and the value they would bring to a full-length production.

Wilson and staff then spent a month interviewing artists and shortening the list. When the dust settled, the artists they had engaged for the California Generations tour included: Native Californian singer-poets, Jimmie James and Julian Lang; *jarocho* musicians Los Pregoneros del Puerto; cowboy poet Jesse Smith; Hawaiian chanters and dancers Sissy Kaio and family; the Garifuna group Chatuye; Hmong master Ge Xiong and his students; Afghani *dutar* master Aziz Herawi and son; and Tibetan folk musicians Chaksam-Pa.

Once the selections were final, Wilson spent three weeks traveling through California and visiting each group. He remembers the evening spent with Jimmie James and Julian Lang at home on the banks of the Klamath River. "Someone in the community had caught a huge sturgeon and everyone was busily butchering it so that it could be shared with family and friends. There was all this coming and going and then they barbecued the sturgeon. We spent the evening eating and talking with Jimmie James, watching the moon rise over the river and the forest. Time just ceased to exist. I was to have stayed an hour; I left at midnight six hours later."

❖ The California Generations Tour

The performers themselves didn't meet until the rehearsals during a four-day period set aside in Visalia before the tour began. Julia Olin, the director for the tour, recalls the feeling that developed among the performers when they came together in Visalia: "There was initially a feeling of apprehension. What kind of a commitment had they made to live, sleep, eat and travel together with these strangers for an entire month? But the apprehension dissolved when they actually began rehearsing." And what surfaced immediately was a feeling of mutual respect for the art, for the artist and for the culture. Olin also remembers a poignant moment when Jimmie James, Yurok Elder and a great spiritual leader, asked the group to stand together, hold hands and pray for the unity and success of the tour.

A spirit of community and unity developed and grew as the tour began. According to Hawaiian performer Sissy Kaio, the group began interacting almost immediately, and by the second week they were like an extended family. On the bus they exchanged stories to pass the time. Once they arrived at their lodgings, Kaio quickly became the main cook and everyone came by to share the meals. They began to learn words and phrases in each other's language, and they quickly began to realize that their similarities far outweighed their differences. Kaio's six-year-old son, Pele, may have profited the most, however, as he learned to dance with the Hmong, play the harp with the *jarocho* musicians, play drums with Chatuye and twirled dizzily with the Tibetan dancers. Sissie Kaio is certain that the experience of that one month will remain with Pele for the rest of his life.

The California Generations tour began on Saturday, October 24, at Stanford University's Memorial Auditorium and ended on November 15 at the University Theatre at the University of California, Riverside.

During those three weeks the artists performed 15 full-length programs, 7 one-hour programs for K-12 students and 18 other outreach activities in locations ranging as far north as Yreka and Arcata and as far south as La Jolla. In one outreach effort the presenter, Humboldt State Center Arts, partnered with local Klamath River Indian organizations to bring the artists to reservation schools and to make free tickets available to those communities.

❖ The Performances

The tour was two-thirds over when California Generations played UCLA's Wadsworth Theatre. The evening began with a pre-performance lecture by David Roche, the fieldwork supervisor for the project. Roche explained the objectives behind the concept and also shared some of the excitement of discovery that those involved with the performance had experienced. By the time the lecture was over, the auditorium was almost entirely full. The audience was typically Californian: every possible race and ethnic culture was represented, as well as every age group.

As the lights dimmed, Master of Ceremonies Julian Lang, a member of the Karuk tribe, stepped out against a background of moon and sky. Addressing the audience, he too spoke about the way in which this group of performers had come together. Lang then introduced Yurok Elder Jimmie James, who brought the audience together in shared prayer (facing east), then proceeded to tell a Yurok prophecy of the coming of the people of four colors to the world and sang the powerful Bush Dance song.

Then out they danced, masked and bearded, Chaksam-Pa (Tashi Dhondup, Sonan Pelmo and Karma Gyaltsen), the only resident Tibetan performing arts ensemble in the Americas. As they stamped and twirled,

they took us back, far beyond the illusory moon to the “roof of the world,” to Tibet. They transported us there through their dances and music. Now residents of San Francisco, these artists came here to live as a result of the political turmoil in their ancestral land and represent a crucial element in preserving the threatened culture of an exiled people.

No sooner had they exited when the lights came up on a group of seated musicians, Afghani *dûtar* master Aziz Herawi, his son Omar and Glulam Abbas Khan, playing and singing music as timeless as the world itself. A famous musician in his native Herat, Aziz Herawi left Afghanistan in 1983 and escaped with his family into Pakistan. He has lived in Concord since 1985 where he has taught his sons to play the ancient instruments and to sing the music reminiscent of the ancient “Silk Route” to China.

As Jesse Smith, cowboy poet, strolled out, the audience was transported back to the tradition of the Old West. A fifth-generation Californian and working cowboy, Smith was born and raised in Porterville, and he regaled the audience with salty narratives and tall tales.

The final act before intermission, Los Pregoneros del Puerto (José Gutiérrez, Valente Reyes and Gonzalo Mata), came out strumming *jarana*, *requinto* and harp. The group of professional musicians and native *veracruzanos* was formed in Veracruz in 1964 and re-united in the United States in 1982. It was a rousing finale to the first half of the program as the group played the original “La Bamba” and other famous tunes from the Mexican gulf coast. A group of enthusiastic fans expressed their approval by clapping thunderously and calling out to them as they left the stage.

The audience had scarcely been seated after the intermission when Hmong master Ge Xiong and his students, Choua Her, Pao Yang and Tong Lee, appeared

in their traditional robes playing instruments and performing intricate dances.

Ge Xiong is master of the *geej* school, which was founded by Hmong elders in Fresno three years ago to teach the young the ancient rituals of talking through instruments and of conjuring power and spirits through dance and song. Threatened by extinction because of the recent political upheavals in Southeast Asia, some 30,000 Hmong live in Fresno today, making it the largest community of Hmong in the world.

Again the stage darkened. With the song and strains of *hula kahiko*, the ancient hula dance and music of Hawaii, Sissie Kaio and her family (Annette, Kawena, Kimo, Lincoln, Jr. and Pele), appeared onstage. Swaying to chants dedicated to the Hawaiian gods, their hands poetically narrated myths and stories. A highlight of the Kaio performance was the *hula* that explained through song and movement why boys are boys and girls are girls. Sissie Kaio directs a *halau* (hula school) in Carson, which is also home to a large community from the South Pacific. There she instructs many young people in the old arts, which are a key to Hawaiian history, folklore and culture.

No sooner had the Kaio family left to the appreciative cheers of the audience than the Garifuna Chatuye, led by Sidney Mejia, filled the stage and the auditorium with pulsating drums and song, combining African rhythms with a beat reminiscent of Puerto Rican and Cuban music. The Garifuna, also known as Black Carib Indians and *Garinagus*, are originally from Belize and Honduras. Chatuye is from Los Angeles where approximately 5,000 Garifuna live.

As the beat of Chatuye's drums faded away, the performance was suddenly over. The artists all came out, joined hands and passed in two lines in front and through each other: Native Californians, Tibetans, cow-

boy poets, Afghani *dûtar* musicians, *jarocho*s, Hmong, Hawaiians, Garifuna—Californians all.

E hele ka poina 'ole

E hull 'eke alo i hope nei

"Go, without forgetting to turn your gaze back here." Suddenly the lyrics of the ancient Hawaiian song took on new meaning. In viewing the marvelous traditions and culture that these people had managed to preserve, it became evident that art and culture are in the end the best possession. Most of these people had arrived in California seemingly dispossessed—stripped of their lands, separated from family and friends. And yet they brought with them riches beyond measure because they carried their culture and their past with them in music, song, dance and verse.

❖ Looking Back and Looking Ahead

In retrospect, Joe Wilson and Mark Cianca both agree that all the years of planning and the hours spent organizing California Generations were well worth the effort. Audio tapes of the performances will be transformed into a compact disc. An hour-long television documentary of California Generations will be completed by June 1993 and will be aired by all 13 California public television stations. The program may also be distributed to the entire national network of PBS affiliates for later rebroadcast. And the news has gone forth. Other states and regions are interested in organizing similar performances. In California, people are inquiring about a sequel to *California Generations*.

The project has been a seed for the development of the artists who participated. Three of the eight ensembles now have professional recording contracts with important internationally-distributed labels. Sissy Kaio and family have been asked to speak at schools and colleges throughout southern California. Five of the

groups have been booked in new venues in distant places as a result of this work.

The greatest gain for all those who participated in California Generations, in its organization, production, performance and audience, is the understanding that multiculturalism and cultural diversity are not mere buzzwords. Rather, they are real concepts embodied in the vitality and energy that is California. ■

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Mark Cianca, president of California Presenters, is also director of Arts & Lectures at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Originally from Montana, he has been an active performing arts presenter in Alaska and California.



Additional State and Regional Arts Agency Initiatives in Support of Cultural Diversity

The following is an overview of the many initiatives taking place in the states and regions that further cultural diversity. The text was submitted by the 46 state and regional arts agencies not highlighted in the preceding chapters. Like the stories in those chapters, this compilation illustrates that the ways in which cultural diversity is addressed are as varied as the populations being served. This chapter provides a sense of both the similarities and differences in state and regional approaches toward a national priority.

The State Arts Agencies

❖ Alabama State Council on the Arts

The Alabama State Council on the Arts has initiated a multifaceted outreach project to identify and assist artists and organizations active in Alabama's diverse rural and multicultural communities. Realizing that traditional information and delivery systems were not applicable in a state with a majority of its population living in nonurban and isolated areas, the council has adopted policy and guideline changes that focus attention on multicultural issues as well as cultural diversity.

New initiatives developed with the assistance of the NEA include the establishment of a Center for Traditional Culture and a matching grant program for the development of rural arts centers in the state's traditional Black Belt region. Additionally, the council is working on an initiative started by the state's African American artist community. The initiative seeks to identify black artists and arts organizations as well as community service organizations involved in arts programming and link them to an information sharing network.

❖ Alaska State Council on the Arts

The Alaska State Council on the Arts has a full-time Folk Arts Coordinator on staff who is primarily responsible for various projects and programs involving Alaska Native art and cultural activities. This position is supported in part by a grant from the NEA Folk Arts Program. The council has a Master Artist and Apprentice Program specifically for traditional Native arts. The purpose of this program, which is also supported in part by the NEA, is to encourage traditional Native artists to pass on their knowledge and skill to younger members of their community.

This year two staff members will be traveling to four rural communities in Nome, Kotzebue, Barrow and Bethel to offer on-site technical assistance to emerging arts councils and to organizations that are interested in pursuing grants for folk or Native arts programs. This activity is funded by a grant from the NEA Arts Projects in Underserved Communities category.

❖ Arizona Commission on the Arts

Issues of cultural preservation, repatriation legislation and community empowerment have caused Native American communities to take a proactive stance in the planning and the formation of cultural committees and museums throughout Arizona. In 1988 Atlatl, a national Native American arts service organization, and the Arizona Commission on the Arts began the first in a series of tribal museum meetings to discuss the lack of accessibility to information and training in museum development. In 1989 funding from the NEA State and Regional

Program enabled the Tribal Museum Assessment program to provide technical assistance to tribal museums through on-site consultations and quarterly meetings. Success of this program is due to Atlatl's significant role in program development and community participation. Ongoing support for the program is provided by the arts commission.

Empowerment through professional staff development of community members in the creation of their own museums is a primary issue. Funding for full-time museum directors at tribal museums is available through the commission. In 1992 additional funding was granted through the Rural Arts Initiative of the NEA Expansion Arts Program for staff support and technical assistance.

Arkansas Arts Council

The Arkansas Arts Council is preserving indigenous art traditions and providing cultural access to some of the most economically depressed counties in the state. The Delta Cultural Center, which serves surrounding counties in the Delta region, is the focal point of programming involving youth in hands-on art projects. Weekly art exchanges and instruction on traditional and nontraditional art forms involve approximately 150 elderly residents. This initiative is funded by a grant from the NEA Arts Projects in Underserved Communities category.

The equity officer for the Arkansas Department of Education's Multi-Equity Office, Dr. Andre Guerriaro, serves as the statewide advisor on cultural accessibility, as well as an arts in education residency grant panelist. He is also cohosting a four-day statewide 1993 Multicultural Education and Art Institute. The council's Arts in Education Program and artist residencies ensure reform in multicultural education by providing diverse artistic and cultural experiences and training workshops

that bring together people of different cultural backgrounds.

Connecticut Commission on the Arts

The Inner City Cultural Development Program, funded by the NEA Arts Projects in Underserved Communities category, provides community-based artists and organizations that present arts events with training, mentors and grant funding. Fieldwork identifies culturally representative artists and organizations to participate in the program. Artists and organizational representatives participate in a fifteen-week training seminar in career development and arts administration. Organizations are provided with modest grants to initiate projects developed during the training. Individual artists are awarded small grants for projects that advance their careers. Mentors are assigned to organizations and small discipline-based groups of artists.

The Master Teaching Artist Program, funded in part by the NEA Arts in Education Program, trains 10 culturally diverse artists to work in the classroom on a biennial basis. Artists participate in an intense, four-day workshop which covers areas such as curriculum development, pedagogy and working in the school environment. An outgrowth of this program is the Traditional Artists in Schools Program pilot project, which trains traditional artists to work in the classroom and provides follow-up residency experiences. It is funded by the NEA Folk Arts Program.

Delaware Division of the Arts

The Delaware Division of the Arts received a grant in 1992 from the NEA Arts Projects in Underserved Communities category to fund the Celebration of Cultures initiative, which supports arts activities in annual cultural festivals and celebrations throughout the state. The pur-

pose of Celebration of Cultures is to assist in developing, restoring or enhancing a cultural component of neighborhood festivals or celebrations. It is intended that these funds will serve to reinforce the celebration of a people's ethnicity by supporting arts activity that reflects the community's culture. Arts activity can include, but is not limited to, performance, arts workshops, and traditional crafts demonstrations by professional artists. Celebration of Cultures grants will range from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

❖ Florida Division of Cultural Affairs

Florida has a rich multicultural population. Forty-nine percent of Dade County's population is Hispanic, 27 percent is white non-Hispanic, 18 percent is black non-Hispanic, and 6 percent is Native American or Asian American. One of the strongest examples of a collaborative project relating to cultural diversity was Interrogating Identity, a multisite project that took place in July 1992 in Miami. It was sponsored by the Center for Fine Arts, the Wolfson Campus of Miami-Dade Community College and the Alliance for Media Arts, which are grantees of the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs.

The project integrated activities in various disciplines to explore the true nature of multiculturalism. Its goal was to be "part of an ongoing collaborative project breaking down cultural separatism in Miami and celebrating cultural diversity." The program provided a forum for artists with differing notions of black identity working in Great Britain, Canada and the United States. There was a visual arts exhibition as well as presentations by seven performing arts companies from various cultures. A film series explored the representation of personal and cultural identity, and included the works of Vietnamese, Indian and African American filmmakers. A speakers program included Latino artists and academics.

❖ Georgia Council for the Arts

One of the best examples of initiatives in support of cultural diversity in Georgia is the Athol Fugard Festival held in October and November 1992. The noted South African playwright attended the festival and worked directly with the theatres involved. Two of the three theatres receive general operating support from the Georgia Council for the Arts. The council was also instrumental in getting Georgia Governor Zell Miller to recognize Fugard as a champion of civil and human rights for all people. The Fugard works challenged audiences to confront issues of racism and change.

The success of the Fugard Festival provides a model for the state of how quality arts experiences can be used effectively to achieve the goals of cultural diversity within the framework of overall programming objectives. As part of its long-range plan for 1992-96, the council developed a goal to "respond to and support the artistic goals and needs of the state's ethnic and culturally diverse populations." A first step has been to develop and distribute an extensive survey/self-audit of culturally diverse resources and accessibility. Next steps include a statewide conference on multiculturalism and increased efforts to include multicultural artists and organizations in the council's funding/programming pipelines.

❖ Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency

The Guam Micronesia Island Fair, mandated and funded by the Guam legislature, began in 1988 for the purpose of promoting economic and cultural exchange among the islands of Micronesia and Guam. Various government of Guam agencies are charged with running this four-day festival, with the Department of Commerce as the lead agency and the Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities providing cultural presentations. The

council has used this vehicle to promote, encourage and showcase the cultural diversity in Guam and surrounding Micronesia. Guam hosts off-island delegations of performers and craftspeople while also seeking out and showcasing the various local ethnic communities of the island. During the five years of the fair's history, artists have participated from the local Chamorro community in increasing numbers, as well as off-island representatives of Palau, Yap, Pohnpei, Chuuk, Kosrae, Marshall Islands, Northern Marianas, Hawaii, American Samoa and New Zealand.

❖ State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (Hawaii)

The State Foundation on Culture and the Arts provides support to its culturally diverse constituency through funding and initiatives that affect the broad spectrum of people living in Hawai'i. In virtually every program area, including arts in education, community arts, ethnic heritage and folk arts, history and humanities, literary arts, media arts, performing arts and visual arts, projects have been conducted that interpret, preserve and perpetuate culture. These cultures represent people of Hawaiian, Japanese, Samoan, Filipino, Balkan, Portuguese, Laotian, Javanese and Chinese heritage.

Initiatives that have particularly affected Hawaii's culturally diverse population include Folklife Hawai'i: A Festival in Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts; the Statewide Cultural Extension Program; and the Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program. Approximately 120,210 people have participated in these activities, which were made possible through funding from the state of Hawai'i and the NEA.

❖ Illinois Arts Council

In 1986 the Illinois Arts Council established an agency-wide Access Program. Through this program, the council seeks partners to administer new strategies to enrich the artistic pluralism of the state. One specific goal of this program is to support artistic projects that are deeply rooted in and reflective of the cultures of people of color. Organizations supported must have a fundamental relationship to their communities, and provision of arts to their communities must be the primary programmatic activity. Very Special Arts Illinois received a grant to provide training workshops for teachers, caregivers and community leaders who are involved in arts activities for people with disabilities. The program also provides support for underserved artists in rural areas and/or artists of color for professional development.

❖ Iowa Arts Council

The Iowa Arts Council encourages cultural diversity in a number of ways. In 1992 the council sponsored memberships for nine presenting organizations to The Association of American Cultures (TAAC), in an effort to assist these organizations in encouraging the preservation and advancement of culturally diverse art. The council hopes that the information shared through TAAC with Iowa presenters will increase public awareness of the need to promote pluralism. All of the agency's granting programs emphasize inclusion of special populations in the planning, implementation and evaluation of arts projects. The council maintains rosters of artists who are eligible to work through its Artists in Schools/Communities and Arts to Go Touring programs, and in the past year the cultural diversity of the roster increased by 14 percent. The council is currently working in partnership with the Iowa-Yucatan Partners of the Americas in developing cultural exchanges with its sister state of Yucatan.

❖ Kansas Arts Commission

The Kansas Arts Commission recently received a three-year \$88,000 grant from the Arts Projects in Underserved Communities category of the NEA State and Regional Program to support arts-related multicultural activities in underserved communities. The new Grassroots Cultural Development Program provides three-year grants for cultural development as well as activity and consultant requests for multicultural and rural organizations. Five multicultural organizations were first-year recipients of cultural development grants for coordinators, consultants, artist fees, training and marketing. These organizations represent African American, Latino, Asian American and Native American populations in four areas of Kansas. They provide community intergenerational arts programs that preserve and teach traditional art forms, as well as promote cross-cultural understanding.

All Kansas Arts Commission organizational grant applicants are asked to address the needs of underserved populations and the cultural diversity of their constituencies, memberships, boards and staffs.

❖ Kentucky Arts Council

At the Kentucky Arts Council, the issue of cultural diversity is not separate from that of accessibility in terms of inclusion. The council's Civil Rights Advisory Committee is charged with advising the council on civil rights and accessibility issues. The council has the responsibility of educating its constituents on compliance with national and state legislation that requires all arts organizations to be accessible to all people regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex or disability. Arts organizations in Kentucky must determine whether they are taking all necessary steps to ensure that their arts programs address the needs of the entire community; whether their boards, staffs, and artistic policies provide for the partici-

pation and inclusion of people of all backgrounds; that the facilities where their programs are presented are accessible to people with disabilities; and that at least some of their performances and events offer opportunities for those with disabilities to participate fully.

❖ Louisiana Division of the Arts

The Louisiana Division of the Arts received \$94,000 from the Arts Projects in Underserved Communities category of the NEA State and Regional Program to support the first year of a three-year program, Outreach to the Underserved Initiative. The division has developed this initiative in collaboration with a broad representation of the cultural community and persons to be served. The initiative will match strong, well-grounded arts organizations and institutions with emerging arts groups in rural, inner-city, underserved and minority communities. The first year of the initiative will focus on the performing arts. The project will be administered through a coalition of the division and six local arts agencies. Established arts organizations, under the direction of a local arts agency, will provide performances and outgoing mentor services to like groups, and in one circumstance, a number of the emerging organizations will be housed in the local arts agency.

❖ Maryland State Arts Council

Recognizing that artists of color and minority-run arts organizations are integral to the culture and artistry of Maryland, the Maryland State Arts Council convened the Multicultural Task Force in fall of 1992 to review the policies and practices of the council and to make recommendations for increasing outreach. The task force, upon completing its work, is intended to evolve into a permanent advisory committee for the council.

The council supports the location of the Alvin

Ailey Dance Theatre Foundation in Maryland. In addition, the council has made a commitment to increasing minority arts programming through Special Project Grants to arts organizations for new projects which produce or present arts activities that encourage participation by artists and/or audiences not usually served by the organization.

❖ Massachusetts Cultural Council

In its efforts to further cultural diversity, the Massachusetts Cultural Council has used NEA Basic State Grant funds to help support several initiatives. The council convened a task force and compiled the recommendations into a cultural access brochure. The brochure includes recommendations for staff, board and audience development, model programs, and resources for inclusion of underserved audiences. The council also sponsored four technical assistance workshops across the state on surveying physical access, assessing programs and services, advocacy approaches, and discussing problems and success strategies.

The council has created a partnership with another state agency, the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, as part of its cultural access plan. All grant applicants must submit cultural access plans that include a self-assessment, objectives and strategies to ensure access for staffs, boards and audiences. The council also added a budget line item to each grant application called Ensuring Access. This has encouraged cultural organizations to do advance planning and use state funds to provide accessible programs and services.

❖ Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs

The Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs has a three-pronged approach to addressing cultural diversity:

indirect and direct funding, technical assistance, and equal opportunity standards compliance. Direct grants to Michigan-based nonprofit African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American arts and cultural organizations help them maintain core operations and undertake a broad range of new initiatives to better serve their constituents. The Michigan Arts League, for example, puts a unique twist on the standard business incubator concept by enabling small, exemplary, community-based arts producing organizations to draw on the resources of consultants and a major university in a prescribed manner over a sustained period of time, while maintaining organizational integrity.

Technical assistance is delivered in three ways: directly to organizations by council staff, through a Public/Private Partnership Program, and through special client initiatives. The council ensures grant recipient compliance with existing state and federal policies and legislation with regard to equal opportunity standards and affirmative action. The council also ensures that organizations provide access in the areas of employment, activities and services.

❖ Minnesota State Arts Board

Cultural pluralism is an important part of the mission of the Minnesota State Arts Board. This year the arts board's planning document includes 26 new strategies addressing cultural pluralism initiatives. Some of the ways in which the arts board has demonstrated its commitment to this issue include representation of diverse aesthetics on review panels and advisory committees; technical assistance workshops for artists in cooperation with community-based cultural organizations; Percent for Art projects that focus on multicultural themes; and a folk arts program that seeks out and presents Minnesota's folk arts heritage.

In March 1990 the arts board established a Cultural Pluralism Advisory Committee that was charged with determining the status of cultural diversity programming in Minnesota and providing practical recommendations for improvement. With the committee's guidance, the arts board recently applied for and received a grant from the NEA Arts Projects in Underserved Communities category for a two-year project proposal. Among the project's goals are holding a statewide conference on cultural pluralism and fostering the touring of multicultural artists within the state.

❖ Montana Arts Council

Culturally diverse communities comprise nine percent of Montana's total population. Indians are the largest group and represent six percent of the citizenry. In order to serve this community, the Montana Arts Council established an Indian Arts Steering Committee to advise the council; had Indian arts as a featured track at the Cultural Congress; held a statewide Montana Indian Arts Conference covering current Indian arts issues; have Indians on peer panels; developed an Indian Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program (with NEA Folk Arts Program funds) and an Indian Arts Education/Tribal College Program (with NEA State and Regional Program funds); and worked with tribal culture groups and individuals on project development and grant writing.

In 1991 the council instituted a new grant category, Folklife and Traditional Arts. Since then, the percentage of culturally diverse projects funded has risen from 7 percent to 20 percent.

All staff are attuned to the importance of equity in working with the state's diverse cultural groups.

❖ Nebraska Arts Council

The Nebraska Arts Council formed its People of Color Arts Advisory Committee 10 years ago. This led to the hiring of the council's first multicultural arts coordinator in March 1992. This coordinator directs the council's Multicultural Initiative, which includes a mentoring program for artists and administrators; a technical assistance program; and an awareness program to include works of people of color in arts programming. The council also interviews and documents multicultural artists through its Folk Arts program and funds statewide collaborations through its Leadership Initiatives program. The Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln used this program to work with the Omaha Tribe and Omaha Symphony on a performance called "West Meets West" for the state's quasquicentennial celebration.

Projects and programs which demonstrate cultural diversity are a funding priority for the council. Guidelines allow multicultural organizations to use up to 100 percent in-kind contributions to match council funding. In addition, all applicants are asked to explain how multicultural audiences and artists will be included in programs.

❖ New Hampshire State Council on the Arts

In New Hampshire only two percent of the population falls into federally defined minority groups. Of that two percent, one percent identifies with Latino cultures. The New Hampshire State Council on the Arts has provided funding for two Latino organizations for about five years. Project funds have enabled one of these organizations to present traditional and professional artists representing art forms characteristic of such countries as Guatemala, Bolivia and Argentina. The other organization was funded to form a Hispanic Youth Theater.

One-third of the state's population federally defined as white traces its ancestry to French-speaking Canadians. Sharing a border with Quebec, New Hampshire has signed a Cultural Exchange Agreement to facilitate the exchange of bilingual artists working in both traditional and contemporary art forms.

An ongoing effort of the council is to bring more diversity to its roster of artists eligible for fee support for school and community performances and residencies. To do that it has had to import artists from other New England states. These visiting artists represent African American and Latino cultures. New Hampshire also has several in-state artists who are Native Americans. The council hopes that with the NEA-funded initiation of a Traditional Arts Program and hiring of a coordinator in 1993, more artists representing diverse cultural heritages will be identified in the state.

New Jersey State Council on the Arts

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts' Cultural Diversity Initiative has several objectives and is composed of several key activities. Principal among them is the multi-year investment of funding (above and beyond regular council grants) in emerging, culturally diverse arts organizations to accelerate their growth, development and outreach. Grants under this component (which include NEA and council funds in each grant) typically support such things as salary assistance, long-range planning, marketing, audience development and professional development. The council recently added a component through which county arts agencies provide technical assistance to local culturally diverse arts organizations. Another major component is an annual round table. The most recent featured presentations on board development, fund-raising and audience development. This is part of the initiative's communication outreach, which is

augmented by a highly active council committee that maintains direct dialogue with participants.

An example of an organization that is using Initiative funds successfully is Powhatan Renape Nation, which was awarded a grant for a marketing initiative that resulted in an expanded program outreach for its Native American festivals and an audience increase of 17 percent in Central-South New Jersey. It also increased outreach into previously underserved and unserved areas.

New Mexico Arts Division

The New Mexico Arts Commission, which is the advisory board of the New Mexico Arts Division, has recognized the value and importance of cultural diversity in New Mexico and has designated culturally diverse arts as a priority. The arts division has established the Culturally Diverse Arts Program, which focuses on arts projects and organizational development by and for culturally specific artists and/or ethnic groups, indigenous groups such as tribal communities, and multiethnic entities.

Examples of two projects funded by the Division include a Hispanic weaving cooperative in rural Los Ojos, which involves community members in all aspects of a successful weaving operation, from raising the sheep to designing and marketing the weaving. The Oo-Oo-Nah-Art Center in Taos is working to preserve the native Tiwa culture by providing arts services, classes and workshops to pueblo children and artists.

The New Mexico Arts Division encourages culturally diverse arts applicants through a one-to-one in-kind match for the first two years of project activity.

New York State Council on the Arts

The Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts supports activities that reinforce traditions within communities as well as programs that enable gen-

eral audiences to experience the traditional arts of diverse cultures. "The Arts of Black Folk" Conference organized in 1988 was directed at African American community-based organizations interested in documenting and presenting the folk arts of their communities. A 1990 conference, "Presenting Folk Arts," and programming at the 1991 and 1992 Association of Performing Arts Presenters annual meetings have enabled performing arts presenting organizations to develop skills in presenting folk artists from ethnically diverse communities. The Folk Arts Program has provided support for family programs, apprenticeships and programming involving children and older folk artists, and new immigrants.

The Special Arts Services Program, which has as its mission the furthering of cultural diversity, has supported such internationally known companies as Dance Theatre of Harlem and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. The program has also supported theatres such as the Negro Ensemble Company, National Black Theatre and New Federal Theatre, which are models in the field. The Technical Assistance Program Pilot was launched in 1989 to improve emerging and developing multicultural arts organizations and create a database of experienced arts management consultants.

❖ North Dakota Council on the Arts

During FY93 the North Dakota Council on the Arts has supported culturally diverse programming through its ACCESS Grant Program and through its Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program. While the ACCESS program is intended primarily for arts in rural communities with populations of less than 6,000 people, it also encourages applications in support of arts projects for underserved populations and minority groups. The program is supported with the help of a three-year grant from the NEA State and Regional Program Arts Projects

in Underserved Communities category. Past ACCESS grants have included support of Native American arts and crafts exhibitions through the North Dakota Indian Arts Association and cultural programming sponsored by one of the state's tribal radio stations.

The Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program was restored with assistance from the Folk Arts Program of the NEA. The program has sponsored master/apprentice teams in support of such diverse art forms as Ojibwa storytelling, Vietnamese embroidery, and Ukrainian costume construction. A second NEA grant will expand the program further in FY94.

❖ Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Council for Arts and Culture

The vast majority (98 percent) of the population of the Northern Mariana Islands is comprised of ethnic minorities representing many different Micronesian, Southern Pacific Island and Asian groups. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Council for Arts and Culture sponsors several annual events that are designed to highlight and celebrate this unique cultural diversity. The annual two-day Flame Tree Festival (on Saipan) hosts over 100 performers, artists and craftmakers from twenty different ethnic groups. The Island Artists Exhibition is a one-month show that focuses on the ethnic roots of the Marianas. Smaller festivals held throughout the year on the islands of Rota and Tinian also promote and enhance cultural diversity.

The council works closely with the Filipino Artists Association, the Korean Arts School and the Chinese Association for the Arts, as well as the Northern Marianas Music Society to develop collaborative projects. The arts council sponsors activities through its extensive collaboration with the public schools to increase arts experiences for students and communities. The arts council

also has a strong commitment to the indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian peoples, demonstrated by constant outreach efforts.

❖ State Arts Council of Oklahoma

The State Arts Council of Oklahoma was recently involved in a unique collaboration to celebrate the state's Native American heritage. As part of the "Year of the Indian" celebration, the arts council, the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, and the City of Oklahoma City worked together to sponsor a special performance by the Great American Indian Dancers. This event, supported in part by NEA Basic State Grant funds, served as the inaugural event for the "Year of the Indian" and the new state tourism marketing theme, "Oklahoma: Native America."

The council was a founding sponsor in 1987 of the Red Earth Native American Cultural Festival, which is America's largest Native American festival. The NEA provides direct funding for the festival, which this year drew people from more than 100 Native American tribes of North America to share the richness and diversity of their cultures. The council works with Red Earth by offering both staff time and technical assistance. The mission of Red Earth, the festival's parent organization, is to promote the continued development of Native American culture by showcasing a variety of art forms.

❖ Oregon Arts Commission

The Oregon Arts Commission has two initiatives that are particularly important to its support of cultural diversity. The first is a three-site project, which received NEA funding, that the Oregon Folk Arts Program is in the process of completing. A particular ethnic group is the focus of study and assistance at each site. Secondly, the commission funds a minority arts administrator to ad-

dress minority arts needs directly. This person works with minority artists and organizations to help them gain assistance from resources already available. In doing so, the administrator also develops listings of culturally diverse artists and potential board members. The most challenging aspect of the work is finding the time and means to help minority arts initiatives outside of the metropolitan Portland area. This new position was made possible by a joint initiative of the Oregon Arts Commission and the Metropolitan Arts Commission (in Portland), and the work in Portland has led to grants through the NEA Expansion Arts Program.

❖ Institute of Puerto Rican Culture

For over 30 years, the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture administered services and arts events from centrally located San Juan out to the rest of the island and its off-shore municipalities. The main tool for this outreach was an ever-growing network of affiliated, volunteer-staffed community centers. Agency decentralization began in 1987, at the same time a grant from the NEA Locals Program provided funding to upgrade five local arts agencies. Matching funds for this successful three-year project to reach culturally diverse communities came from the institute and from host municipalities.

In 1989 the institute's Cultural Promotion Program received a grant to enhance the growth of culturally diverse organizations through arts and humanities workshops, in collaboration with its network of local arts agencies. As a result of its success, the program received a special allocation by the legislature for FY90-91. These funds are now part of the institute's yearly budget allocation. In 1992 decentralization was fully realized. This accomplishment, along with fifth centennial commemoration activities, demonstrates the institute's leadership in providing funding and direction to all its communities.

South Carolina Arts Commission

The South Carolina Arts Commission's Multicultural Arts Program (MAP), established in 1988, has provided grants to more than 100 culturally specific arts and community organizations, tribal communities and individual artists of color. The program has also assisted mainstream arts organizations to serve their communities better by involving members of underserved communities in dialogue and planning. MAP has provided technical assistance to organizations and individuals and has been vital to the development of a statewide organization known as Artists of Color. In addition, MAP and Arts in Education Program directors have worked to increase the cultural diversity of the agency's Approved Artist Roster.

The commission has made long-term investments in a number of organizations rooted in rural ethnic communities, and has supported the activities of such organizations in both rural and urban areas. The commission has provided continuing assistance to the Folk Arts Program at the University of South Carolina's McKissick Museum, whose outstanding work in cultural preservation is highlighted in Chapter 5.

In 1991 the commission mounted a major art exhibition, entitled "Statements of Heritage: Variant American Visions," devoted to the works of 20 South Carolina contemporary artists of color. The show greatly increased the visibility of participating artists and served as a focus for discussion and recognition of the significant quality and diversity of work by artists of color from South Carolina.

South Dakota Arts Council

More than seven percent of South Dakota's population is Native American—Lakota and Dakota Tribes of the Great Sioux Nation—and is concentrated on nine rural reservations and in the cities of Rapid City, Sioux Falls

and Aberdeen. A grant from the Technical Assistance category of the NEA Locals Program, matched by tribal and foundation funds, started the Native Arts Planning Effort. A Native American project coordinator has started working on a needs assessment. The basic premise is that traditional models of local arts agencies have not worked on reservations. The assessment will show why and develop local arts agency models that will work on rural South Dakota reservations.

In cooperation with the state Division of Education and the National Science Foundation's Systemic Change Initiative, South Dakota is integrating an arts curriculum in elementary and secondary schools. Cultural diversity is a cornerstone of this pilot project, which is funded by the NEA's Arts in Schools Basic Education Grant. Two of the six pilot sites are schools on reservations.

The success of the South Dakota Arts Council's efforts to reach culturally diverse and underserved communities is based on a philosophy of personal, one-to-one contact and encouragement maintained over several years.

Tennessee Arts Commission

The Tennessee Arts Commission has a new grant category, Arts: Advancement and Expansion, that is supported in part with funds from the NEA. It provides technical assistance and/or direct support for arts projects to minority-run arts organizations, organizations serving youths with disabilities, and organizations serving the aging. Among the nine grants awarded for FY93 was one to the Native American Indian Association in Nashville for long-term work with a consultant to establish a marketing network for Native American artists and artisans. Two other organizations that received grants are Knoxville's African American Carpetbag Theater, which will

work with a team of specialists to transform a newly acquired facility into a self-sustaining and revenue-generating entity; and the Edgehill Center of Nashville, which will work with at-risk children in an inner city area to create a series of murals.

Other applicants receiving partial funding include the Blues City Cultural Center of Memphis, for productions of plays about Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, and an annual black cultural festival.

Texas Commission on the Arts

The Texas Commission on the Arts is working to ensure that excellent arts opportunities are available to all Texans and that these opportunities reflect the state's diverse heritages and populations. The commission is creating and administering programs that sustain and improve services and accessibility to geographically isolated and rural communities, culturally diverse populations, individuals with disabilities and economically disadvantaged communities. Since 1988, grant applications from minority-operated organizations have increased by 28.4 percent. The number of grants awarded to minority-operated organizations has increased by 142 percent.

Grants to organizations providing service for or in minority communities increased by 65 percent from FY88 to FY92.

A provision in the appropriations bill mandates that the commission establish a policy of "equitable distribution of grant funds to organizations with a predominantly minority audience, or which serve predominantly minority areas." The commission has adopted an Equity Plan, which requires approval by the legislature. Among the goals of the plan are to make equity a priority in the agency mission; to place equity riders in all commission contracts with arts organizations; and to include in the FY93-94 Legislative Appropriation Request mea-

surable funding for minority artists, audiences and organizational development.

Utah Arts Council

With a 94 percent Anglo-American population, Utah is among the country's most homogeneous states. But minority populations here are rapidly growing. In response to changing demographics, the Utah Arts Council has developed two initiatives to reach minority audiences and to provide culturally diverse programming for all Utahns.

The Living Traditions Festival, cosponsored by the Salt Lake City Arts Council, is a three-day event featuring music, dance, craft and food of Salt Lake's folk and ethnic communities. Over 500 artists from 45 ethnic groups participate and estimated attendance is 20,000. For the first three years of the festival, grants from the NEA Folk Arts Program supplemented state and city monies. Local funds from both public and private sources have kept admission free the last three years. Hispanics are Utah's largest minority, at 5 percent. The Hecho en Utah project, supported by the NEA Folk Arts Program, has included an exhibit featuring 10 traditional artists and a concert series featuring 14 bands and eight dance troupes, as well as production of cassettes featuring 20 Hispanic ensembles. Response from the Hispanic community has been very positive and has generated record requests for grants and assistance.

Vermont Council on the Arts

The Vermont Council on the Arts is committed to involving people of all cultures, ages, genders and abilities in decision making and policy setting, and increasing Vermonters' understanding and appreciation of world cultures. A new component of the Touring and Arts in Education Programs, called Options, helps support the fees of performing and visual artists from within or outside the

United States whose art reflects the traditions of specific cultures.

A partnership is being developed with the Eastern Townships of Quebec through meetings of each region's cultural communities, supported by NEA funds. Ideas are being generated about how to exchange cultural resources and collaborate on new projects.

With NEA funds designated for underserved communities, the council is supporting two Abenaki projects: the carving and installation of two totem poles carved with animals and birds important to Abenaki beliefs, and dance classes that are rebuilding traditional dance skills. These programs are assisting the Abenaki people in strengthening pride and heritage, and increasing awareness and understanding of Abenaki culture among non-Native Americans.

❖ Virginia Commission for the Arts

Cultural diversity is one of six major emphases of the Virginia Commission for the Arts, and it is pursued within every program. For example, all grantees of general operating support are required to actively seek involvement of people of color as staff and board members, artists and audiences. Many of these grantees specifically promote African American culture. One is the Harrison Museum of African-American Culture in Roanoke, which maintains a collection of paintings by black artists and memorabilia and library materials on the history of the city's black community.

The commission's performing arts touring roster includes African American and Chinese American performers, as well as artists representing the cultures of India and Ghana. The Virginia Folklife Program, a partnership of the commission and the state humanities foundation, is currently sponsoring a tour of guitarists who perform traditional pre-blues, blues and religious

music in a distinctive style. All of these activities are supported with both state and NEA funds.

❖ Virgin Islands Council on the Arts

All of the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts' activities address the issue of cultural and ethnic diversity. Over the last year the council has provided support for an Afro-Cuban Dance Ensemble to teach dance throughout the territory; a folklife festival, held in Washington, DC, in celebration of cultural diversity and heritage with participants from the Virgin Islands; and the 5th Caribbean Festival of the Arts held in Trinidad and Tobago, which brought together traditional dancers and musicians, folklorists, historians and visual and performing artists of the Caribbean. The council also provided support for a worldwide travelling art exhibit, sponsored by UNESCO, that featured the works of Dutch-, English-, French- and Spanish-speaking artists from 35 countries in the Caribbean region. Additionally, to mark the Columbus Quin-centennial, the council participated in the exhibit "First Biennial of Central American and Caribbean Paintings," sponsored by the Dominican Republic.

❖ Washington State Arts Commission

The Washington State Arts Commission has since 1989 administered the Governor's Heritage Award to celebrate the strength and diversity of this state's ethnic, cultural, occupational, religious and regional communities by honoring individuals who have made significant contributions in these areas. Currently, the arts commission is taking advantage of support from the NEA to bring the arts to and help enable artistic work by the state's differently abled populations; preserve endangered skills through a Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program; produce The Spirit of the First People, a project to present, record and publish a book documenting Native American mu-

sic and dance; begin projects to document Hispanic music traditions; and document and honor the traditions of Washington's Grange Halls. Commission programs encourage diversity through grants, technical assistance and commissioning of artwork.

❖ Arts and Humanities Section of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History

A folk arts staff person at the Arts and Humanities Section of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History documented the life and work of Appalachian folk artists through taped interviews and articles in West Virginia's statewide cultural magazine, *Goldenseal*. A grant from the NEA Arts Projects in Underserved Communities category assisted West Virginia's deeply rural communities with cultural development and a more thorough identification of the diversity of their artists.

Augusta Heritage Center matches West Virginia's master craftspeople with developing craftspeople. By supporting this program financially, the Arts and Humanities Section has encouraged the continuance of these art forms and the traditional ways in which they are translated from one generation to the next.

In November 1992, the Arts and Humanities Section cohosted the Native American Coalition's first annual American Indian Conference. This conference focused on Native American issues and how various cultural agencies can help this community meet its goals. The section has also worked with the NAACP in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle area to develop programs there and statewide.

❖ Wyoming Arts Council

The mission of the Wyoming Arts Council is to enhance Wyoming's quality of life and thus its long-term cultural and economic strength by encouraging and supporting

diversity, access, vitality and excellence in the arts. This recently revised mission statement reflects Wyoming's commitment to promoting cultural diversity in the state's arts programming. Annual grant training sessions include information and discussions on the inclusion of all cultures in arts programming, and the staff seeks out new groups presenting culturally diverse arts activities to inform them of funding opportunities and programs. Recently funded programs include a multicultural storytelling conference; the Mountain Man Music Festival; a Festival of International Theatre and Dance; and Wyoming Somos: Celebration of Our Hispanic Pride.

The Regional Arts Organizations

❖ Arts Midwest

Arts Midwest is committed to making the Midwest's diverse cultural life more vibrant, accessible and understandable. Its Minority Arts Administration Fellowships program began in 1989 with support from the NEA and several private foundations, making it possible for arts administrators from African American, Asian American, Latino and Native American communities to enhance their management and development skills through residencies at cultural institutions throughout the United States.

Arts Midwest's Cultural Development program began in 1991 with NEA State and Regional Program support. Developed to address the needs of arts presenters and organizations in African American, Asian American, Latino and Native American communities, the first component included the formation of the Midwest Cultural Network. This group of 12 culturally grounded arts presenters from the target communities share expertise and serve as project advisors to Arts Midwest. The second component, the Cultural Development Fund, invests in projects to strengthen the artistic and

managerial capabilities of organizations rooted in these communities.

In April 1993 Arts Midwest convened the Cultural Dialogue Conference in Milwaukee, bringing together more than 200 arts and cultural workers from the participating communities to address issues such as advocacy, equity in funding, and the responsibilities of artists and organizations to their communities. Publication of a Midwest Cultural Agenda will document the conference. NEA funds were used to leverage additional support from private foundations for this event.

Arts Midwest, based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is a consortium of the state arts agencies of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

❖ Consortium for Pacific Arts and Cultures (CPAC)

CPAC's long-term mission emphasizes promoting the traditional cultures of the Pacific, and promoting and encouraging the exchange of traditional and contemporary art forms. Programming priority is given to the native and ethnic cultures of each region. The populations in the islands of the CPAC region are Polynesian and Micronesian (predominantly Samoan, Chamorro and Carolinian). Interesting and culturally diverse projects have resulted from introducing Western genres to the islands (a different twist on cultural diversity).

As such, CPAC brought a bluegrass band to all three of its member territories, including the tiny islands of Rota and Tinian in the Northern Marianas. This was the islands' first exposure to bluegrass. In addition CPAC has co-sponsored the Missoula Children's Theatre for projects in Guam, the Marianas and American Samoa. CPAC is also launching an arts in education exhibit for grades K-6. The theme is "Myself, My Island, My Home," and it is for children of the islands to com-

pare their thoughts and motifs with those of their counterparts on other islands.

A workshop on Hawaiian quilting has just completed its third year of residence in American Samoa, with a fourth being planned for next year. While Samoa once had a quilting tradition of its own (from missionary days) it has been lost over time. The introduction of Hawaiian quilting, which was also learned from the missionaries in the early nineteenth century and adapted by the Hawaiians, has spawned a "new" art form. The Samoan men and women have already adapted the style in unique Samoan ways.

The Consortium for Pacific Arts and Cultures, based in Honolulu, Hawaii, is a regional organization of the state arts agencies of American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

❖ Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA)

Mid-America Arts Alliance has committed its leadership and program funds to embracing cultural diversity as an integral part of its mission and its future development. NEA support in 1984 helped launch M-AAA's special initiatives for the presentation of culturally diverse work throughout the region. In 1989 an NEA Challenge Grant enabled M-AAA to continue expanding and adjusting the focus of its initiatives devoted to cultural diversity. ExhibitsUSA, a national division of Mid-America Arts Alliance, has developed traveling visual arts exhibitions featuring work of contemporary artists of color.

M-AAA's current program in the performing arts, New POP (New Presenting Opportunities), is a consolidation of the organization's past decade of work and experience. New POP projects include the commissioning of a music, dance and video piece that addressed the decline and rebuilding of an inner-city Houston neighborhood; marketing assistance for touring by St. Louis Black Repertory Theatre; and commissioning and

marketing assistance to emerging artists of color, such as Teatro Hispano de Dallas (Teatro Dallas).

Mid-America Arts Alliance cultivates new relationships and fosters risk taking with a proactive approach to issues of cultural diversity in its region. With an emphasis on providing access to culturally relevant arts programming through educational activities, workshops and artists' residencies, M-AAA performing and visual arts programs provide contextual frameworks that encourage all viewers to experience the arts.

Mid-America Arts Alliance, based in Kansas City, Missouri, is a regional consortium of the state arts agencies of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas.

❖ Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation (MAAF)

The mission of the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation is to promote the sharing of the region's arts resources, particularly in underserved rural and culturally diverse communities. The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation's Jazz Program was created in 1991 to strengthen jazz in all of its forms, from the traditional to the experimental, and to help bring jazz to the region's audiences. With initial funding from the NEA State and Regional Program, the program supports a network of jazz presenters, selected for their ability to work cooperatively with other presenters and to reach their own communities through outreach activities. Network participants receive project support and attend meetings where they can exchange information on techniques for building new audiences, marketing the work of emerging artists, organizing block-booked tours and creating successful residency and educational activities.

Through the Jazz Program, travel subsidies are also made available to organizations to defray the cost of attending professional development activities such as conferences, workshops, showcases and festivals. Addi-

tionally, a computerized directory of jazz organizations was developed and information regarding jazz activities in the region is sent to presenters through tour update mailings and articles in Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation's newsletter ARTSInk.

The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, based in Baltimore, Maryland, is a regional consortium of the state arts agencies of the District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, the Virgin Islands and West Virginia.

❖ Southern Arts Federation (SAF)

Cultural diversity is integral to the mission and goals of the Southern Arts Federation, and is fundamental to all its programs and projects. Multiculturalism is included as one of four board-endorsed agency priorities and is integrated into the agency's goals and objectives. These objectives provide the parameters for the development of each program's long-range plans. Furthermore, SAF staff, board, advisory committees and grant panels are all structured to reflect the breadth of cultural perspectives that comprise the South.

A representative sample of SAF program initiatives includes: the development of a technical assistance project focusing on underserved presenters in conjunction with the 1993 Southern Arts Exchange booking conference, which will include culturally diverse presenters from across the region; the development of a series of "musical roots" tours, the most recent titled "Bluegrass, Blues and Bembe," designed to provide presenters and audiences with artistically excellent samples of the diverse musical heritage of the South; and SAF's quarterly jazz radio show, "JazzSouth," now carried on more than 90 radio stations across the region, providing a unique opportunity for the expansion and education of jazz audiences and the celebration of an important component of the African American cultural heritage of the South.

The Southern Arts Federation, based in Atlanta, Georgia, is a regional consortium of the state arts agencies of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

❖ Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF)

The Western States Arts Federation has historically determined that one of its greatest opportunities is to assist developing arts among diverse ethnic groups and one of its greatest challenges is to ensure wider representation of the varied cultural and ethnic populations and artists. A recent report issued by the Western Office of the Council of State Governments acknowledges that the region served by WESTAF is “the most racially and ethnically diverse and is likely to become more so.”

WESTAF’s planning has recently begun with the reconfiguration of its governance structure, which encourages cultural diversity on its Board of Trustees. During the past year, WESTAF has initiated a Regional Folk Arts program; developed a component for presenting literature in underserved communities in the West (initially funded by the NEA); increased its jazz programming throughout the region; and rewritten guidelines in its core (performing arts) programs favoring rural, underserved and culturally diverse artists and works funded through the NEA Presenting and Commissioning Program. Additionally, new programs enhancing professional development and technical assistance ensure access to emerging and diverse arts groups and constituents.

The Western States Arts Federation, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is a regional consortium of the state arts agencies of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.



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